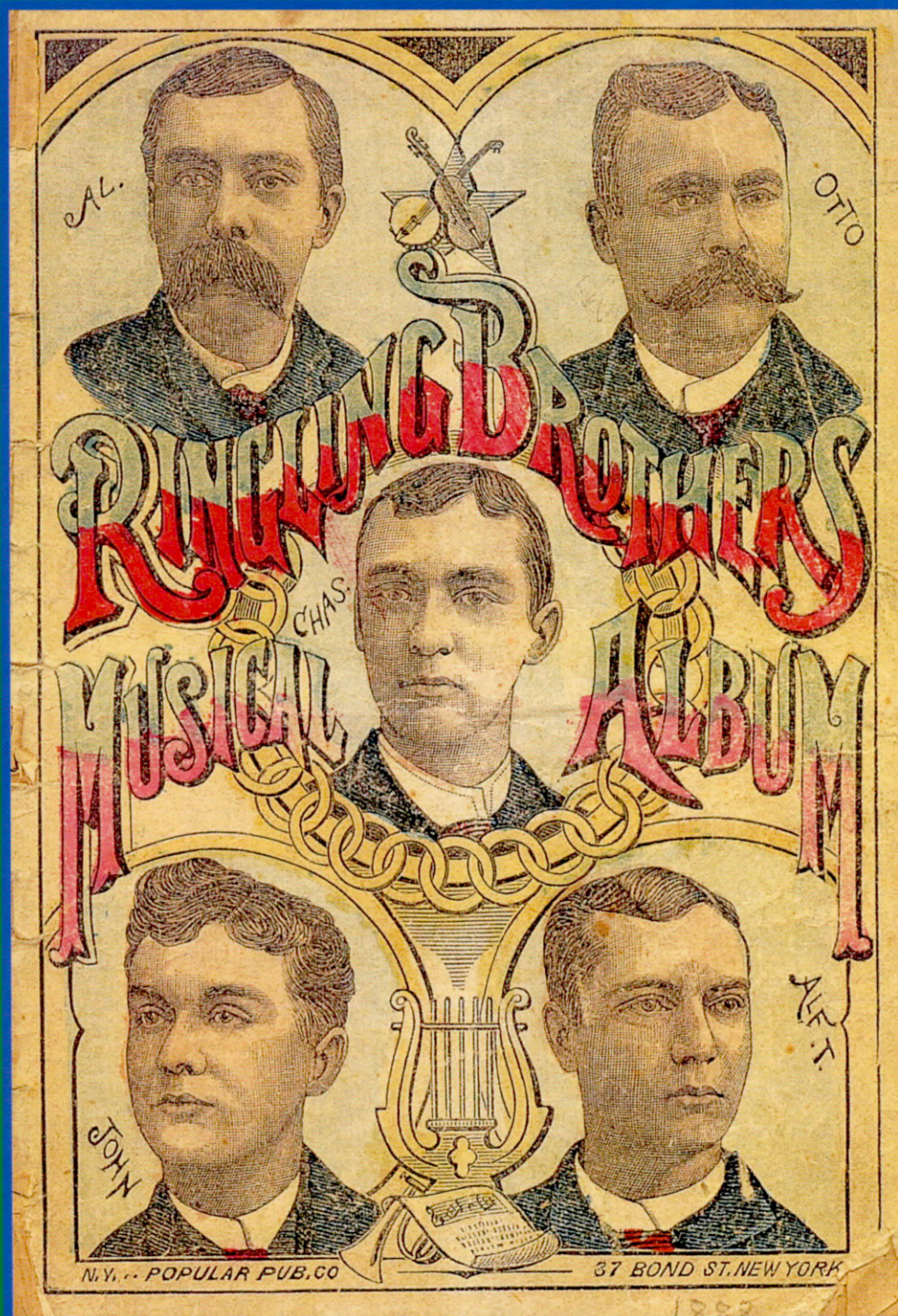


Bandwagon

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The Ringling-Barnum GORILLAS And Their Cages

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.
and
Richard J. Reynolds III

PREFACE

Gargantua and Toto serve as the inspiration for this paper. As celebrated attractions of the menagerie of Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus, they were the most famous circus gorillas of all time, nay two of the best known gorillas anywhere, ever. Moreover, they were the most successfully promoted circus animals of the twentieth century. Here we undertake to tell their story. We offer commentary as well about their successors on that circus. The cage wagons used to transport the Ringling gorillas also warrant attention, for they were the most expensive and elaborate ones ever used by

A Eastern lowland gorilla. Internet image.



A Mountain gorilla. Internet image.

a circus. To put this story in perspective, some gorilla background is in order.

Scientists and taxonomists now hold that there is but one species of gorilla (*gorilla gorilla*) divided into three subspecies:

(1) the Western lowland gorilla (*g. gorilla*) from the rainforests of coastal West Africa, notably the Cameroons and Gabon,

(2) the Eastern lowland gorilla (*g.g. graueri*) found far away to the East in the uplands of the eastern Congo (nee Zaire), and

(3) the Mountain gorilla (*g.g. beringei*) located high up in the volcanic Virunga Mountains which sit astride the intersecting borders of the Congo (Zaire), Uganda, and Rwanda. The Mountain variety, now numbering only 700 animals, has been studied far more than the others and has been made famous by such works as Diane Fossey's 1983 *Gorillas in the Mist* (made into a 1988 movie). However, it has rarely been seen in captivity.

The three types of gorillas have subtle morphological differences.

They increase in size somewhat as one goes from West to East with the Mountain the largest. The Western lowland gorilla frequently has reddish brown hair on the top of its head. The Mountain gorilla has very black, longer hair and gives a woolly appearance. Little wonder; it gets cold at the 12,000 to 14,000 foot heights of the Virungas where it lives, even though the location is right at the equator.

With 100,000 as a best estimate of its wild population, the Western lowland gorilla is far more abundant than either of the others. Oddly, however, it has been less studied in its natural habitat and rarely photographed there. Owing to their plentiful numbers in areas more readily accessible to the shipping routes, Western lowland gorillas are the

A Western lowland gorilla. Internet image.



ones which have traveled with circuses.

Gorillas were one of the last of the marquee animal attractions to make their appearance in America. Always captured as youngsters (often by shooting the poor mothers and taking their infants), they were very susceptible to diseases contracted from natives and handlers and suffered from poor nutrition and psychological stress on the long and arduous overland and sea journey in the days before air transport. Gorillas are highly intelligent and social animals and live in very structured groups. When an infant is suddenly snatched from the comfort of that situation, it is traumatized by the loss of its mother and her support group. As a result of all these causes, gorillas were often more dead than alive when they arrived at their destinations.

GORILLA FRAUDS

As the nineteenth century wound down toward the twentieth, stories were magnified about the mighty and mysterious ape that lived in the dense jungles of tropical Africa. It was said to be an unbelievably huge and strong animal, possessed of a savage and demonic spirit and a ferocious terror to all who dared enter its domain. Much of that is pure malarkey for the animal, if anything, is downright placid. However, there is no doubting that one could be frightened as he moved through the jungle, unable to see but a few feet all around, when suddenly a huge male gorilla charges through the underbrush screaming and thrashing the foliage around him. It is the famous gorilla charge which in truth is more a scare tactic than a real threat.

Much of the gorilla's reputation as a danger to man can be laid at the feet of Paul du Chaillu (1835-1903). Of French extraction, this traveler, adventurer, and anthropologist was likely the first white man to have seen a gorilla alive in the wild when he visited its west African haunts in the late 1850s and again in the 1860s. Upon his return to the West he wrote extensively about savage

gorillas and embellished the stories while on the lecture circuits. It was just such material that laid the groundwork for the giant man killing gorilla with which Tarzan (Johnny Weismuller) duelled to the death in *Tarzan the Ape Man* (MGM 1932) and the one that terrified the comely Fay Wray in the blockbuster *King Kong* (RKO 1933). This sort of material made Americans go gorilla wild, and set the stage for the ultrasuccessful promotion of Gargantua the Great in 1938, but we get ahead of the story.

The du Chaillu stories occurred at a time when American showmen duelled one another to exhibit the largest, the most dangerous, the most sacred, and the rarest of any and all kinds of animals. They could not resist the greatest ape of them all. Hence, a number of other kinds of primates were exhibited by circuses as gorillas before and after the turn into the twentieth century, and even as late the 1950s with the Al G. Kelly and Miller Bros. Circus. Its route



The "gorilla" pit show on Kelly-Miller in the 1950s. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

books listed a "gorilla" among the animals with the show. It was in pit show run by one Joe Lewis.

William Woodcock, Jr. was there at the time and said that Lewis gave one of the most outlandish, yet entertaining, "come-ons" in pit show annals. To see the animal, folks paid 15¢ apiece and some would exit mumbling, "It is nothing but a chimpanzee."

These faux gorillas were mostly chimpanzees but at other times they were orangutans, which had been shown in America as far back as 1789. Even large baboons have been

claimed as gorillas. Barnum excited New Yorkers when, around 1867 in conjunction with the Hyatt Frost version of the Van Amburgh menagerie, he imported what he called a gorilla. With much secrecy he installed it in his American Museum in New York City (the second venue for that attraction). The public poured in to see what Barnum called a "Live Gorilla, the only specimen of its class ever captured alive." The noted naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) came down from Harvard's Museum of Comparative Anatomy, which he had founded, paid his admission to Barnum's, took one look at the primate and proclaimed--a common baboon, not a gorilla. Barnum feigned outrage, claiming his foreign agent had deceived him. He knew all along that the primate was not a gorilla and, in fact, Frost had warned him about having the ruse exposed.

Probably the most notable of the gorilla frauds was the celebrated Johanna of the 1894-1900 editions of Barnum & Bailey. She was also shown in the Armory in New York City's Central Park during the winters. She was a chimpanzee, though James Bailey insisted she was a gorilla. Or, if not, he and his attaches claimed she was a hitherto unknown anthropoid ape intermediate between the chimpanzee and gorilla. That claim even made its way into a serious discussion of hybridization by Dr. Robert M. Yerkes (1876-1956), the preeminent Yale psychologist, ethologist and primatologist.

On February 4, 1899 an inventory of the show's properties was taken in England in connection with the public offering of shares of Barnum & Bailey Limited. Interestingly, it listed this ape simply as "one Johanna" without naming her scientific species. However, naturalists Dr. Frank Chapman and Prof. Joel Allen had examined Johanna earlier when she wintered at Central Park. They were from the neighboring American Museum of Natural History and had proclaimed, without hesitation, that she was pan troglodytes--a chimpanzee. The aforesaid Paul du

Chaillu also examined her and pronounced the same. A photograph of her was taken, and it leaves no doubt that she was a chimp, not a gorilla.



A close up of John Daniels II. From the Norwood book.

EARLY TRUE GORILLAS

Gargantua and Toto, both of the Western lowland subspecies, were by no means the first gorillas in America nor were they the first ones with the Ringling show.

The first genuine gorilla arrived in America in 1897, in Boston on May 2, where it lived but six days. In fact only ten living gorillas had reached Europe before then. The first one went to England in 1855 where it was exhibited by the menagerist George Wombwell but, oddly, as a "black chimpanzee." From 1897 until 1921 only two other gorillas made it alive to America--in 1911 and 1914. Both were shown in the Bronx Zoo in New York and neither lived long, the first one for less than two weeks and the second but for eleven months. Then came the first circus gorilla--for Ringling Bros & Barnum and Bailey. He was a young male named John Daniel.

John Daniel--Since 1918 this gorilla had been a London pet of an animal loving British lady, Miss Alyce (or Alyse) Cunningham. She kept him in her apartment and from time to time showed him to the public in the London zoo. He proved that gorillas could survive given proper care and attention. Through trial and error, patience and perseverance Miss Cunningham learned the nuances of gorilla keeping. As we shall see, Miss Cunningham's story was later replicated by the original owners of both Gargantua and Toto.

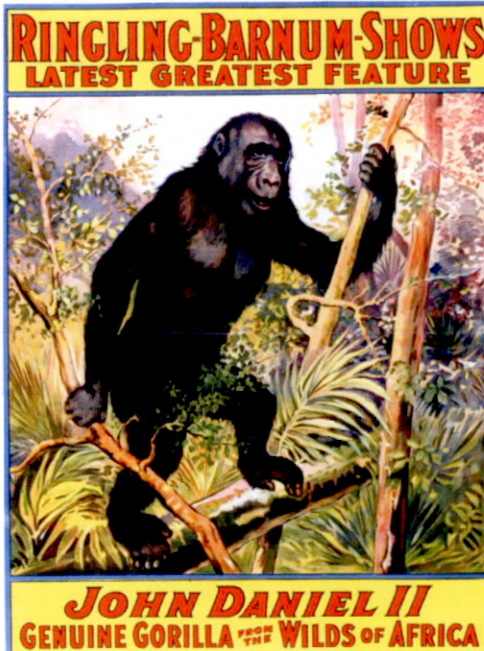
In 1921 John Daniel was sold. His owner claimed that she did not know he was headed for a circus. But he was. Animal dealer and exhibitor John T. Benson, an Englishman by birth, made the arrangements that saw John Daniel delivered to Ringling-Barnum at the old Madison Square Garden in March 1921. Right away he began to deteriorate and failed to survive the Garden date, dying there during April. His remains went to the American Museum of Natural History where they were received on April 18, 1921 and assigned catalogue no. 54084. However, that was not the end of Miss Cunningham's gorilla story.

John Daniel II--In 1923 she got another young male from Gabon. He was initially named Sultan and later

train, was taken by automobile each day to the showgrounds, and was shown to the public in the menagerie within a tall mesh enclosure that looked like an aviary. He was often in the backyard being photographed with the likes of clowns. Sometimes, between performances, he was allowed to play in one of the performing wild animal arenas (big cages) in the big top. At season's end Miss Cunningham took him back to England. He appeared that following winter (1924-25) with the Bertram Mills winter show in London's Olympia. For that he came into the ring on a light lead, marking the first time a gorilla had ever appeared in a circus performance though it does not appear that he did any "tricks" in the circus context of that word. John Daniel II died in London in 1927.

Miss Congo--This female, was the next circus owned gorilla. She was quite a rarity, the only true Mountain gorilla ever seen alive in America. But she never trouped. She was obtained by adventurer cum cinematographer Ben Burbridge in the Virunga Mountains. He obtained her while he was there filming *The Gorilla Hunt*, released in 1926 and produced by Joseph P. Kennedy--one and the same as the progenitor of the famed Kennedy clan of Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. The Burbridge film was the very first movie showing gorillas in their natural habitat. Burbridge brought Miss Congo to America in October 1925. From there she was taken to his brother's estate on the banks of the St. John's River near Jacksonville, Florida. During the winters of 1925-26 and 1926-27 Miss Congo was the subject of intense study by Dr. Yerkes, whom we mentioned earlier.

In early 1927 Burbridge sold Miss Congo to John Ringling, and she was sent from Jacksonville to Sarasota. On Monday, March 28, 1927, near the time of Miss Congo's arrival, Sarasota debuted its new Edwards Theater. Coincidentally, the opening film was Burbridge's *The Gorilla Hunt*. When Miss Congo landed in Sarasota, the Ringling circus had not



The big show used this Strobidge litho in 1924. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

John Daniel II. He too came to America and toured with Ringling-Barnum throughout its 1924 season. This time Miss Cunningham came as well. She literally lived with him throughout the tour. That seems to have been a key to his good health, thus avoiding the fate suffered by his namesake. The circus did not own this animal. He belonged to Miss Cunningham throughout. He traveled with her on a sleeper on the fourth section of the



Susie and trainer John C. Lucadema in 1931. *Billboard* photo.

yet established its new winter quarters there. So, Miss Congo lived at Cà d' Zan, the bay front mansion that had been occupied the year before by John and Mable Ringling. There the gorilla was photographed with visiting dignitaries, including soon-to-be Democrat presidential nominee Al Smith. [He was a friend of John Ringling.] After the circus moved into its new Sarasota winter quarters in November 1927, Miss Congo was sent there. At the time she was said to be seven years old and to weigh 160-pounds. A Capt. Ricardo was in charge of the animals in quarters, including Miss Congo.

Seemingly, John Ringling was not pleased with the two John Daniels and Miss Congo as circus attractions. In truth they were just playful juveniles. In his mind they did not fulfill what the public was looking for in a gorilla. He must have been thinking of what the du Cahillu stories portrayed, i.e., a frightful monster. We know this from a letter written by Carl Hathaway, the show's General Manager, to John Ringling North. The show was then considering the purchase of the gorilla Buddy (the later Gargantua). In the letter, dated December 2, 1937, Hathaway said-- "We had one [gorilla] in winter quarters which you probably remember, Congo. Mr. John never exhibited this animal but was keep-

ing him (sic--should be 'her') under cover to let him grow to full size. His idea was to exhibit an animal that would be a child's idea of a gorilla as taught in the travel books."

Sadly Miss Congo did not live to see her full growth and died rather suddenly at the Sarasota quarters on April 23, 1928

Susie--Celebrated as the Graf Zeppelin gorilla, she arrived on that great German dirigible when it docked at Lakehurst, New Jersey on August 4, 1929. This was the first shipment of animals ever to come to America from Europe by air. In addition to Susie, the live cargo consisted of a companion chimpanzee plus 600 canaries, all consigned by the Ruhe animal firm in Germany. Susie had arrived in Germany in 1927 and was a well toured animal when she left for America. Once here she became the property of the Jersey Pet Stock Co. in Newark. A certain John Lucadema and William Dressman took over her exhibition.

Susie was a peripatetic gorilla. She was a special side show attraction on Ringling-Barnum in Philadelphia in 1930 and again in 1931 at early canvas dates. She made other cameo field show appearances as well--Johnny J. Jones carnival (April 1930), 101 Ranch & Wild West on Long Island (July 1930), and the Rubin & Cherry carnival (August 1930). Additionally, she was exhibited at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, Toronto's Canadian National Ex-

Buddy at three years of age. Lintz collection.



Gertrude Lintz with three of her chimps. Lintz collection.

hibition, Madison Square Garden's Pet Show, and World's Museum, East Side Resort, New York. For these appearances she traveled around in a glass-enclosed cage mounted on a truck. Finally on June 11, 1931 she landed in the Cincinnati Zoo, its first ever gorilla. She died there in October 1947.

As we see from the above, none of the gorillas exhibited by Ringling-Barnum up to this time spent any time riding in the usual cage wagon on a circus flat car. John Daniel I never left the Garden, his successor rode throughout the season in a passenger car compartment on the show train, and Congo never traveled. Susie was trucked around.

Within two years after Susie's wanderings the public appetite for gorillas was whetted by those two blockbuster films mentioned earlier, *Tarzan and Ape Man* and *King Kong*. If only such animal could be found for the circus. Lo and behold he was waiting just around the corner, a male named Buddy, standing 5-feet tall and weighing 350 pounds.

GERTRUDE LINTZ'S BUDDY

Gertrude Davies Lintz was another animal-loving British-



Mrs. Lintz with one of her chimps. Lintz collection.

born lady who played a key role vis-à-vis gorillas. She was a socialite, married to William Lintz, a physician. They maintained a large estate in Brooklyn. She specialized in breeding and professionally showing St. Bernard dogs, winning honors at the famed Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden.

She and her husband had a sea captain friend, Arthur Phillips, who sailed in the African trade. Sometimes he brought back animals to sell in America. In 1928 Captain Phillips sold three chimpanzees to Mrs. Lintz. Three years later, in September 1931 Phillips contacted Mrs. Lintz offering six young chimpanzees and a sickly baby gorilla suffering from pneumonia. He arrived with them on his *S.S. West Key Bar*. Mrs. Lintz bought the animals and took the baby gorilla home and nursed it for five days.

As the baby could not chew solid food it was fed ground up fruit and vegetables. For a year it was fed cod liver oil and later meat and liver. The weak gorilla had contracted a form of infantile paralysis. Mrs. Lintz began exercising the baby, which little by little regained the use of its legs and arms. In her book *Animals Are My Hobby* (1942) Mrs. Lintz wrote: "Presently I had a round dozen healthy young apes in the house, for the six chimpanzees that had

arrived with wrecked nerves and digestive systems all pulled through. We named the gorilla Massa, a native word for 'Big Boss.' It was a female, so we thought. There was no question in the minds of the scientists who, four years later, accepted Massa for the Philadelphia Zoo as a future mate for their fine gorilla, Bamboo. Massa's convalescence was slow. She was fretful and easily upset. Her feeding became the biggest chore of my life, for she refused to feed herself, partly because she liked attention."

In December 1932 Phillips returned from Africa with another baby gorilla aboard his ship. This youngster was about eighteen months old and had been kept for a year by missionaries at Kribi, Cameroon. When Phillips' ship put into that African port on November 5, 1932, the missionaries offered the youngster to the ship captain, and he bought it for \$400. The youngster was as healthy as could be and became the ship's pet on the westward voyage to America. As was often the procedure, the ship docked in Boston before continuing to the port of New York.

Unfortunately, it seems that while docked in Boston, a disgruntled sailor, who had been fired by Phillips, snuck back aboard the vessel. In a fit of revenge, the sailor threw nitric acid from a fire extinguisher into the little gorilla's face. The injuries were appalling. The face and chest were baldy burned. Luckily his eyesight had not been damaged. Phillips contacted Mrs. Lintz advising that he was sailing for New York, had another baby gorilla aboard, but that it had suffered an accident, and he was not sure it would live long enough to reach her. Mrs. Lintz was waiting on the dock in the Port of New York when Phillips' ship arrived there. She noted in her book, "The captain and crew all looked as if they had lost their best friend. The little gorilla was still alive, but his suffering was too great for them to bear thinking about. The men called him Buddy. He was used to people, because he had lived for a while with a missionary's family, but evidently

he liked the sailors even better."

Mrs. Lintz agreed pay \$2,000 or \$2,500 (the accounts differ). For that she got Buddy plus some chimpanzees Phillips also had on board. The price was low because Buddy was "damaged goods," as it were.

Mrs. Lintz quickly began treating the little gorilla. Olive oil was gently put on his burns, eye drops were administered and salve was put on his eyelids. In time the burns healed. However, the muscles controlling his upper left lip were so damaged that it was permanently raised up giving Buddy the look of a perpetual snarl. It became his trademark contributing to the image of a savage gorilla as later spun by the circus advertising men.



Richard Kroener and Buddy. Pfening Archives.

Richard Kroener, a young German, had been a Lintz employee caring for her St. Bernard show dogs. He became her assistant in raising Buddy (or Buddha, as he was also called) and a real bond developed between man and beast. Anthony Desimone also worked for her. The two assistants built cages for the Lintz animals in the basement of her Brooklyn home. J. Bryan III wrote, "Buddy's training began. At school time, each morning, Mrs. Lintz hustled him into overalls to keep him alert and to give him self-respect. The first lesson was walking erect. Buddy's reward was helpings of peanuts. . . . By the year's end he understood such simple commands as 'Put on your clothes.'... Mrs. Lintz quenched his flares of disobedience by pointing to a grotesque Chinese mask and warning him. 'Look out!

It's the bogey-man.' Later she found she could get the same effect by whipping a doll's head from her pocket. The sight of it terrified him."

Mrs. Lintz often took her gorillas Massa and Buddy on rides in her automobile. Buddy seemed terrified of large trucks, trolleys and horses. When they came alongside, he would scream and attempt to get under cover by burying his face in her dress or pulling her coat over his head.

With a house full of apes: two gorillas plus chimpanzees, Mrs. Lintz framed a traveling ape show. It was a forerunner of the one that Bob and Mae Noell began in 1940 and continued until 1971. The Lintz show, with gorillas Massa and Buddy, was shown at the Century of Progress in Chicago in 1933, (a World's Fair exposition). Billed as the "Gorilla Villa," Mrs. Lintz appeared with her apes dressed in Safari clothing. Her show was located next to that of the "Streets of Paris" featuring the sensational and sultry Sally Rand (1904-1979), the most famous exotic dancer of that time. She wowed fairgoers with her patented routine, dancing in seeming total nudity amid luxurious ostrich feathers which she waved about while undulating in a "now you see now you don't" tease. Visitors to the Century of Progress were thus entertained with side-by-side shows of human and non-human primates, both species in the altogether, though in Ms. Rand's case it was illusory.

In 1934 the Lintz apes were at Coney Island and also the Canadian National Exposition in Toronto. One Vernarde McArdle was now managing the show and acting as head trainer. He had been with Bill Dressman when he had taken gorilla Susie around as described above. Richard Kroener was McArdle's assistant and animal keeper. The gorilla show then went to south Florida. Billed as the "Gorilla Village" it played Hialeah in January 1935 during the racing season under American Legion auspices. It moved on six trucks with glass fronts and contained the two gorillas and eight chimps.

During 1935 Mrs. Lintz decided to sell Massa. She was afraid of him. It stemmed from an accident at her Brooklyn home after the world's fair stint. She was washing the floor of

her kitchen. Massa was there too as he frequently was for such chores. She slipped and fell, knocking a full pail of water onto the big gorilla. Frightened, Massa attacked and bit her badly. She needed sixty-five stitches to close the wounds. Thereafter Mrs. Lintz kept her distance from him. Finally, an arrangement was made with the Philadelphia Zoo. It wanted a female to go with its big male Bamboo who had been at the zoo since 1927. As noted above, at the time Lintz thought Massa was a female and sold him as such for \$6,000. She drove him to Philadelphia and delivered him to the zoo on December 30, 1935.

Only later did the zoo discover that they had bought another male. Both did very well there. Bamboo lived in the zoo until his death in 1961. But, Massa outdid not only Bamboo but every other gorilla in the world before or since. He died on December 30, 1984, having lived with Lintz and at the zoo for 53 years and 3 months. That is the world record longevity for a captive gorilla.

In 1936 the Lintz apes were back in South Florida, this time at the

Buddy just before he went to Ringling. Lintz collection.



North Miami zoo. It was a private facility predating the later Crandon Park zoo on Key Biscayne and its successor, the present Miami Metro near Kendall (below Coral Gables). It was here that Buddy suffered another act of animal abuse, this time at the hands of a young drifter on whom Lintz had taken pity and hired to clean around the cages. He was no good, and she fired him for incompetence. He took revenge on her by slipping back to the cage and feeding Buddy chocolate syrup laced with disinfectant. Though his intestines were burned, Mrs. Lintz again nursed him back to health; this time by coaxing him to ingest stomach medications. With Buddy recovered, Lintz again went back north and continued showing her apes, including the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. She had him and five chimps back at the North Miami zoo in January 1937.

A frightening event in her Brooklyn home prompted Mrs. Lintz to get rid of Buddy. It was a dark and stormy night, one with gothic implications of the Edgar Allen Poe sort. She was asleep in her bedroom. Buddy was in his cage in the basement. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed and the wind howled. She was awakened by the sound of heavy naked shuffling feet. The door to her bedroom slowly opened and there was ponderous Buddy. By then he weighed well over 300 pounds. He had managed to get out of his cage. Frightened by the sound and fury outside, he went upstairs, apparently seeking comfort from Mrs. Lintz. He approached her and climbed into bed. Though unnerved, she soothed him as best she could, slowly arose, and coaxed him to go with her to get some fruit and then back to his cage. That did it. Buddy had to go.

The gorilla story eventually became a movie. Titled *Buddy*, it was released in 1997 by Jim Henson and Columbia Pictures. The show starred Rene Russo as Mrs. Lintz and the Scottish actor Robbie Coltrane as her physician husband. The critics gave it only fair reviews. Taking considerable license with the facts (typical for Hollywood), it completely omitted Buddy's later show biz life. In truth Lintz sold him to the Greatest Show on Earth. That is where we go next.

GARGANTUA THE GREAT

By 1937 Buddy (Buddha) was well known to circuses and zoos, having been seen by thousands in the ape show that Mrs. Lintz took around. However, that phase of his exhibition was nothing compared to what would come next. The stars were aligned for the spectacular.

The catalyst was John Ringling North, nephew of the famous brothers who founded the circus bearing their name. [For brevity we here refer to him as "John North," even though he liked using his middle name for the prominence it connoted.] On or about November 6, 1937 John North made a deal to refinance Ringling-Barnum's staggering debt. As a quid pro quo for that success, the majority shareholders, Edith (Mrs. Charles) Ringling and Aubrey (Mrs. Richard) Ringling, agreed to install North as President of the show. He thus became the man in charge.

North felt the circus had become moribund during the five previous seasons (1933-1937). There was some merit in that, particularly as to staging, costuming and specs. [Those were the years when Ringling operated in near receivership. It was managed by Samuel Gumpertz who answered to the show's creditors.] North wanted new attractions and found one in Buddy the gorilla.

Coincidentally, Mrs. Lintz thought the Ringling Circus was the proper new home for her pet. The first evidence of contact we have unearthed was a letter written in late November 1937 by Richard D. Kroener, Lintz's animal keeper, to Ringling General Manager Carl Hathaway. The letter offered Buddy for sale. Kroener said the gorilla stood 5' 6" tall and weighed 350 pounds. On December 2, 1937 Hathaway wrote to John North [Part of the letter is quoted above.] It urged North to consider buying the gorilla. Said Hathaway, "I have written to Kroener asking the price and for photos of the animal and where it could be seen. If this animal could be bought at a reasonable price, even though we have to put him in a cage and not handle him, it would be a remarkable attraction . . . I think it would be worth your time to investigate it. It is doubtful if any



The new horse-drawn Gargantua cage and attendants ready to enter the big top in 1938. Pfening Archives.

zoo would want him, but the price might be such that we could handle him."

North jumped on the opportunity. He and his brother Henry Ringling North were then in New York attending to the reorganization of the circus. Mrs. Lintz got in touch with them, and the North brothers visited her and her gorilla at her Brooklyn estate. On December 4, 1937 Mrs. Lintz gave John North a written option, good for one week, to buy the gorilla and two chimps for \$10,000. For an additional unspecified sum she offered three trucks used for her ape show then located at the North Miami zoo where the animals had been exhibited earlier. In the end, the Norths bought Buddy for \$10,000.

Gargantua in his new cage.



The brothers also agreed to take long time keeper Kroener. The purchase was made before John North had been formally elected as the new circus President. That would not happen until December 10, 1937 at the show's annual meeting in New York.

Arrangements were made immediately to ship Buddy to the Sarasota circus winter quarters. Buttoned up in his heavy wooden crate-cage, Buddy was hauled by truck to Manhattan's Pennsylvania Station. There the crate was loaded into a baggage car of that railroad attached to the Orange Blossom Special, a famous New York-Florida train that the Seaboard Air Line Railroad operated in connection with the Pennsylvania. Keeper Kroener rode in the car with the gorilla. At Washington, the train was switched to the Seaboard for the run south. The Special had a section that ran over to Tampa with some of it being sent down to Sarasota. It arrived there late in the afternoon of December 12, 1937. The baggage car carrying Buddy was spotted at the Seaboard depot in Lemon Street in downtown Sarasota. The big guy in his crate-cage was immediately loaded onto a truck and hauled out to the winter quarters, some four miles from the depot. Great secrecy was maintained throughout the operation.

Once in quarters, Buddy's crate-cage was placed in what has been called "the animal hospital tent." But what to call him? The name "Buddy" was thought too pedestrian. Besides that was the nickname of Henry Ringling North, the new Vice-President of the show [called "Henry North" hereafter]. The matter was batted around between the North brothers and their ace ad man, Roland Butler. Henry North was

graduated from Yale University where he had studied literature. In a moment of brilliance he recalled a sixteenth century satirical work by Francois Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, father and son giants. He suggested that their new gorilla be named Gargantua. Butler added "the Great" and thus was born the greatest circus animal promotion since Barnum's African elephant Jumbo back in the 1880s. After Gargantua had been at circus quarters for some weeks, the press was invited to have a look at him

The show's advertising department went to work bombarding the news with stories about the animal, including accounts of his attacking his keeper Kroener and show President John Ringling North. Roland Butler devised a brilliant promotional scheme. Lithographs were ordered to whet the public appetite.

The show then addressed the question of how to exhibit him on the road. A steel and glass prison designed by Mrs. Lintz was put on paper. Her general idea was followed in the construction of a cage wagon that would become his home. It was built in Sarasota by William Yeske, long time Ringling master wagon builder. Though various accounts have recorded slight differences in the length, we here go with the measurement shown in official Ringling property manifests. They specify a length of 25 ft. 6 in. It was 8 ft. wide. Size wise it was larger even than the Nile hippo den no. 88, which measured 20 x 8 feet.

The gorilla cage was of steel construction and rode on dual pneumatic tires. The paint scheme was white with gold trim and lettering. Gold lettering on the mud board beneath the cage said "Gargantua the Great." It was assigned wagon number 98. At the rear was a 4 x 8 foot compartment divided into two sections. The one on the right rear was just large enough for Gargantua to enter and stand up. He was put in there when his main room had to be cleaned or when he had to be examined up close. The other part of the rear compartment was for keeper Kroener. It



New poster for Gargantua printed by Strobridge in 1938.

included a bunk because he rode with the animal while traveling between engagements. The main compartment (c.17-feet long) was Gargantua's living area and exhibition room. To entertain him, an automobile tire was placed in his main room. He would fling it about with forceful enthusiasm. Bars of chilled steel, each 7/8 inch thick and two inches apart, were installed along both sides of the main compartment. Double two inch thick panes of glass with a half inch of air space between them were permanently affixed outside the bars along both sides. The idea was to protect the gorilla from respiratory diseases carried by humans. When finished, no. 98 was the most elaborate and expensive cage wagon in circus history up to that time.

However, the *crème de la crème* feature was air conditioning. That wonder of environmental luxury was just then taking hold in America. John North was a friend of Lemuel Bullware of the Carrier Corporation in Syracuse, New York.

The Terror billing in New York.



On February 23, 1938 his company was commissioned to build an air-conditioning system for the cage. Carrier provided wagon design features to insure its success. The air conditioning unit was installed in a four by eight foot compartment in the front end of the wagon.

The system allowed Gargantua to enjoy a constant temperature of 75 or 76 degrees and 50% humidity. Carrier capitalized on the effort, calling it the "jungle-conditioned cage," a slogan that won the 1938 Advertiser's Award. By April 1st the air conditioning equipment had been installed and the cage was ready to receive Gargantua for the trip to New York and the opening in Madison Square Garden on April 8.

It bears mentioning that of all the circus stars, both human and non-human, only Gargantua traveled in the luxury of air conditioning. There was no such thing on the sleeping cars for the performers and workingmen, nor did they have it in the dressing wagons and the tents they used on the lot--none of that would not come until the 1960s.

The promotional campaign was now running full tilt. To tease each city along the route, beginning in New York City for the opener, canvas banners were hung on buildings all over town weeks in advance. In huge block letters they read "THE TERROR" --nothing more. Closer to the date, the banners were augmented with another reading "THE TERROR IS COMING." After that, the city was covered with lurid color lithographs of "Gargantua the Great, The Largest Gorilla Ever Exhibited--The Worlds Most Terrifying Living Creature," as shown here. He was outlandishly depicted as a King Kong sized monster in whose hand man is a mere toy. Though gorillas inhabit dense tropical rainforests, Gargantua was shown on the open veldt attacking what look like Masai warriors of East Africa. However, these misrepresentations made no difference to a then largely unsophisticated public. Remember, that was decades before public television taught us better with its barrage of programming about the animals and tribes of

Africa.

Gargantua was becoming a household name. He was given coverage in the pages of *Life* magazine and his snarling countenance was on the cover of the April 11th issue of *Newsweek*. In those days before television, the big weekly magazines were hugely popular. The show printed a 16-page courier (10.5" x 14") with a Gargantua head shot on the cover and plentiful photographic coverage inside. Using bulk mail, thousands of these couriers were mailed in advance of the show dates to households in the cities along the route, a usual practice back then.

Dame fortune almost put an early end to Gargantua's inaugural tour. On June 22, 1938 Ringling-Barnum was shut down by a labor strike in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It retreated to its Sarasota quarters. John North decided to keep going by sending much of the Ringling show, including Gargantua, to augment the subsidiary Al G. Barnes-Sells Floto Circus. The enlarged Barnes circus debuted in Redfield, South Dakota on July 11th. It played out the remainder of the 1938 season as "Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto Combined Circus Presenting Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Stupendous New Features."

During the 1938 tour, Gargantua was not displayed in the menagerie. Instead he was placed in the back yard in a tent near the back door to the big top. Your Atlanta author (Reynolds) can attest to that. On Sunday, November 6th, when the show was setting up here, large numbers of Atlantans went to the circus grounds hoping to get a glimpse of the mighty gorilla. His cage was inside a smallish tent outside the big top. People gathered around it trying to get a free peek at the gorilla inside. A couple of openings between sections of the canvas sidewall afforded a glimpse. Though only a wee tad at the time, I do recall looking inside and glimpsing a large animal moving around inside the cage.

The paying audience saw Gargantua only when his cage was pulled around the hippodrome track as part of the performance. It was a special number well down in the program which called it "An Educational Feature without Equal."



The other new poster used in 1938.

Frank Buck, the celebrity animal collector-dealer and self promoter par excellence, was also a star attraction that year. Before the ape entered the big top, Buck rode into the center ring in a howdah atop an elephant. Dressed in his trademark pith helmet and safari outfit, he gave a short spiel on what the audience was about to see. Then, here came Gargantua.

As the band played Maurice Ravel's hypnotic "Boléro," the gorilla cage slowly circled the hippodrome track, six somber looking men walked alongside, three on each side. They too were dressed in safari outfits and pith helmets. They carried rifles to emphasize the serious danger posed by "The Terror." As hokey as that now seems, the crowds ate it up. In this number the cage was usually pulled around the tent by a team of six horses. That was certainly true for dates earlier in the season as old home movies and photographs attest. However, when your Atlanta writer saw it here at the Tuesday matinee on November 8th one of the show's yellow painted Caterpillar crawler tractors did the honors. That may have been due to a soggy lot in Atlanta; it had rained hard the day before. Or, perhaps by that point, late in the season, the show had decided that the tractor could do the job better.

The circus closed the 1938 season in Sarasota on Sunday, November

27th. The next day Gargantua, in his air conditioned cage, was loaded onto a circus flat car which left that afternoon for New Orleans. There it was put aboard the Holland-American Lines ship *Massdern* bound for England. The big guy was headed for the Bertram Mills Circus's annual indoor winter engagement at London's Olympia. He was featured there for six weeks.

By February, 1939 Gargantua was back in Sarasota. For the 1939 and 1940 tours, he was displayed in the Ringling-Barnum menagerie. The cage was positioned in the center of the tent so that folks could see him from both sides. A large banner reading "GARGANTUA" was suspended above it.

Gargantua had a nightly ritual. The keepers would place a large soft cotton blanket in his cage. The ape would carefully spread it out on the floor smoothing out the wrinkles and making sure the corners were flat and square. Then he would lie down and roll up in it. This was likely the instinctive nest building behavior that has been observed in wild gorillas. The next morning Gargantua would methodically rip the blanket to threads. The circus bought them by the gross.

Ringling-Barnum jealously guarded the name of its animal super star. In 1939 it came to the show's attention that the Hennies Bros., a railroad carnival, was traveling around with a midway attraction called "Gargantua the II." It was no doubt one of the gorilla frauds mentioned earlier, likely a chimpanzee. On August 23, 1939 Ringling's New York attorney John Reddy wrote Hennies demanding that it cease using "Gargantua" in any way in connection with its show. On the 26th Walter Hale, Hennies press representative, answered agreeing to quit with "Gargantua" and stating that, thereafter, Hennies would substitute "GARGANTUAN." That word, Hale argued, was of common usage in the English language and not the exclusive property of anyone. On September 1st Reddy objected to that as well. How this matter was resolved is unknown to us.

In his first three years with Ringling-Barnum millions of people saw Gargantua--from Miami to

Vancouver, British Columbia, from San Diego to Portland, Maine and most all points in between, both large cities and small.

Santa Claus Gargantua as he appeared on the 1938 Ringling-Barnum Christmas card.



When Gargantua went on the road with Ringling in 1938 there were only nine other gorillas to be seen in America: Philadelphia zoo (2), Cincinnati zoo (1), Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo (1), Chicago's Brookfield Zoo (3), and San Diego zoo (2). People did not travel around like they do today. We were very parochial in our habits. The Great Depression still cast its baleful shadow and not many had the opportunity to travel to these large, mostly northern cities to see their zoos. For most Americans, Ringling brought to their home towns the very first living gorilla they had ever seen, and that includes both of your authors. To many the word "gorilla" meant Gargantua the Great.

MARIA HOYT'S TOTO

While Gargantua was making headlines in America, a female gorilla, about seven years old, was thriving as a household pet in Havana, Cuba. She was owned by Augusta Maria Daurer DeWust Hoyt-Maria Hoyt for our purposes here. She was the wife of Kenneth Hoyt, a Yale graduate (1908) and a wealthy retired businessman. He relished big game hunting. His wife often accompanied him on his expeditions. In February 1932 she was with him in the jungles of French Equatorial Africa. While out in the bush hunting gorillas, a guide and tribal head found and gave to Mrs. Hoyt a nine-pound baby gorilla. She named the baby "Toto."

Our story thus comes to the third woman who had raised gorillas that would wind up with the Ringling circus. Like Gertrude Lintz, Maria Hoyt wrote a book, *Toto and I*, (1941), wherein she told of her interest in

primates, and of her pet gorilla.

Mrs. Hoyt quickly bonded with baby Toto. After a few months in the jungle, the expedition, including Toto, made its way to the port city of Dakar, Senegal well to the north of gorilla country.

There they boarded a ship for Marseilles, France. From there Mrs. Hoyt and her pet went on to Paris. By then the infant Toto was sleeping with Mrs. Hoyt and joined her in bed while she ate breakfast. Toto, like all infant gorillas, was delicate and susceptible to illness. The baby caught pneumonia, was treated in Paris, and then went to Marseilles to recuperate on the Mediterranean Sea under Maria Hoyt's care. Meanwhile Kenneth Hoyt had gone back to America.

The couple wanted to find a suitable place where Mrs. Hoyt could raise her ape. The decision was made to go to Havana, Cuba. It was the ideal place. In great ape circles, Havana was famous for the raising of those animals. In 1898 or thereabouts, Mademoiselle Rosalie Abreu established a primate center near Havana. There she kept a colony of chimps, orangutans, and other monkeys (but never a gorilla). Mlle. Abreu looked after her charges with

great care and immense feeling. She was known world wide. Even John Ringling visited her and her apes (in December 1927). It was her colony that, in 1915, produced the first chimpanzee ever bred and born in captivity.

Mr. Hoyt secured a place in Havana. His wife and Toto then embarked from Cherbourg for their new home. Mr. Hoyt was at the dock when the ship arrived. Toto was dressed in her baby clothes when she had her reunion with Mr. Hoyt.

In the new home, Toto occupied a playroom, with a large glass-enclosed veranda. It had been especially built for her, with little tables and chairs. As she grew, her room became too small and a larger facility was constructed in the corner of the Hoyt garden. Mrs. Hoyt hired a Spaniard named Jose Tomas to care for the animal. He had worked for Mlle. Abreu at her primate colony and therefore knew how to keep and care for great apes. When Abreu died in 1930, her family disbanded her primate colony. As a result, Thomas was "at liberty" when Toto landed in Cuba.

By the time Toto was three-years old she had the strength of two men. Toto quickly accepted Tomas as her keeper. He slept with her in her bedroom, Toto in her iron bed. Quite obviously the two got along well together. Toto also had a pet of her own, a kitten, which she assiduously groomed and tenderly hugged.

Eventually, the animal started showing aggressiveness that precipitated a decision. Though she was very attached to Toto, Mrs. Hoyt was fully aware that with her pet now grown she had to move on. Besides, neighbors were complaining about the noise coming from the Hoyt property. The Cuban government advised it was time to dispose of her. Moreover, Kenneth Hoyt, her husband, had died in 1938.

The matter came to a head in 1940. John North had heard about the female gorilla in Havana. Mrs. Hoyt was a friend of Gertrude Lintz and knew that Lintz had sold Gargantua (nee Buddy) to the Ringling circus. So, Hoyt was not surprised when, in 1940, she received a wire from John North, saying he was coming to

Maria Hoyt and Toto. Hoyt collection.



Havana and wanted to talk to her about Toto.

For his part, North was aware that a given circus animal can only remain a top drawing card for so long before public interest begins to wane. And Gargantua had been pulling them in for three years. North saw the need to stimulate public interest with a pair of gorillas. Mrs. Hoyt knew that North had paid Mrs. Lintz \$10,000 for Gargantua. She tentatively agreed that the circus could have Toto and that Jose Tomas would go with Toto as keeper. After North left, Mrs. Hoyt prepared herself to part with her "baby."

On July 3, 1940 Ringling-Barnum and Mrs. Hoyt formalized their agreement with a written contract. The purchase price for Toto was \$8,750 with delivery of the ape to be made in Havana. That same day Ringling's New York attorney Leonard Bisco wrote John North:

"Mrs. Hoyt was here today and signed the enclosed two duplicate originals of the contract for the purchase of Toto. This is in the form which I prepare except for two changes made at Mrs. Hoyt's request: (1) She wants the money paid to her New York bank. (2) She wants it understood that the keeper, Jose Tomas would receive board and lodging in addition to the stated salary. She also wanted you to put something in the contract about keeping Toto in an air conditioned cage. She seems very attached to the animal and is worried about its future as though it were her own child. I got nowhere in my attempt to get a reduction in price because of the duty which you would have to pay. Under the circumstances, I followed your instructions and had to agree to pay the full price. When you land the gorilla in this country you will find there is a 15% ad valorem duty, and it will be best to have a contract available at that time to show the price paid although, of course, the Customs officials are not bound by this in their appraisal of the value of the animal. On the subject of the price Mrs. Hoyt requests that you do not tell anyone (except, of course, the Customs officials) how low the price is. She does not want it known that she sold the gorilla for what she regards so cheap a price. In fact that



Madam Toto, the first, in Havana, Cuba.

is the reason why she wants payment made through her bank in New York because she does not want the purchase price known in Cuba."

Construction of a second gorilla cage began in the fall of 1940. The new one was a near duplicate of that built in 1938 for Gargantua. Official Ringling property manifests list it as 25' 9" or three inches longer than Gargantua's cage. There were also differences in the front-end vents for the air conditioning unit. It was assigned wagon no. 175. It too was painted white. On January 10, 1941 Henry Ringling North wrote Mrs. Hoyt advising the cage had been completed and that it would soon be sent to Havana to get Toto.

ENTRY PROBLEMS

Early on Ringling officials learned that even though Mrs. Hoyt had sold Toto, she did not readily relinquish either her mothering instincts or her proprietary interest in her former pet. That is manifest in the terms of the sales agreement and lawyer Bisco's comments thereon, as set forth above. Throughout Toto's life she constantly bothered circus officials about the ape. She was adamant that Jose Tomas be with Toto at all times. Tomas was Spanish, having come to Cuba from Barcelona. On January 27, 1941 Mrs. Hoyt wrote to Henry North, as fol-

lows, "Referring to your letter of the visa difficulties of Tomas and his family, he has a Cuban wife and a one year old baby. I have been advised that he would need a contract to show that he needs admission into the United States, about which I cabled you and have not received any answers yet."

Melvin D. Hildreth was an influential Washington lawyer and insider. A major player in the National Democrat Party, he served the inauguration committee for President Roosevelt in 1937 and subsequently chaired the one for President Truman in 1949. He was also a circus fan and had served as President of the Circus Fans Association of America in 1937-1939. Ringling regularly sought

his counsel in dealing with problems arising from federal laws and regulations. So, Henry North wrote Hildreth asking for his assistance in bringing Tomas to the United States.

On December 13, 1940 Hildreth answered, "Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of December 12 in reference to Jose Tomas. We are assuming that this man was born in Spain, and officials of the Bureau of Immigration here advise that the Spanish quota (against which this man would be charged) is current. This would indicate that there ought not be any delay, but on the other hand it also means there are not very many unused numbers for this particular period. Jose Tomas should immediately take steps to enter the United States, and proceed to the American Consul in Cuba for that purpose. Does he propose to enter the United States permanently with the intention of becoming a citizen?"

Hildreth again wrote to Henry North on January 21, 1941, "John [North] indicated that he would very much prefer having Joe Tomas come into the United States under an immigration visa; i.e., with the intention of becoming an American citizen. This being so, it will not be necessary for us to go ahead with the affidavit asking for exemption from the Contract Labor Laws, but it will be necessary for Jose Tomas to at once take steps to apply at the office

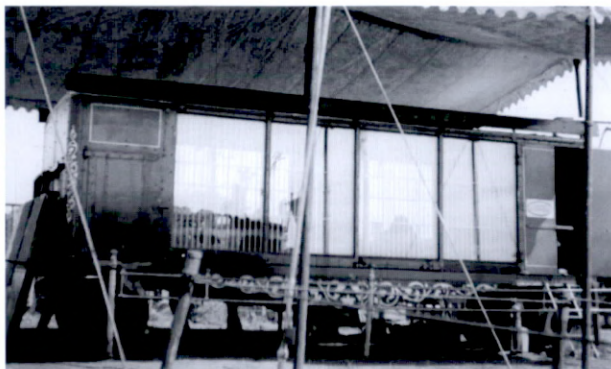
of the American Consul General at Havana, Cuba.

"Have Tomas go at once to the American Consul General's office, make his application so his name will be placed on the register of applicants, and the Consul who interviews him will advise him exactly what he will have to have in the way of credentials; i.e., proper passport (which he can get from Cuban officials), birth certificate, evidence of financial independence here, (which the show can supply; or rather which is clearly evidenced by the contract which he will have with Ringling Brothers), possibly character references, etc."

Ever the worrier, Mrs. Hoyt wrote Henry North on February 6, 1941, "I am very much afraid of your having trouble with the Consular officers in Havana to grant a visa for Jose Tomas. I would ask that you make sure this is done. You know as well as I do, that Toto would never be able to live without Tomas, more so being shut up, which she never was in her life. Please do let me know if you have secured an entry visa for Tomas."

"In case you could not secure a visa for Tomas we would have to postpone the shipment until you get it, as it is absolutely impossible to let Toto go without Tomas, and I will never do it."

Mrs. Hoyt's concerns proved unfounded. It was time to go get Toto. The circus sent its new air conditioned cage to Havana to fetch her. It was shipped on a circus flat car to Port Everglades, Florida, arriving there on February 11, 1941. J. C. Donahue, Ringling traffic manager, was in charge of the operation. He accompanied the cage to the port. There the flat, loaded with the cage, was put onto a railroad car ferry operated by the Florida East Coast Car Ferry Co., a subsidiary of the Florida East Coast Railway. Accompanying the cage itself aboard the ferry were Paul Danovsky, a technician in charge of the cage's air conditioning unit, and two helpers. John North had gone ahead to meet the boat upon its arrival in Havana. On February 18, 1941 the circus took



The Toto cage in red with its new no. 97.

delivery of Toto and put her into her new home on wheels. Naturally, Mrs. Hoyt was right there.

The rail car ferry *Joseph R. Parrott* brought Toto to America. It made an overnight voyage from Havana, loaded to near capacity with 26 rail cars, including the circus flat car, with Toto's no. 175 cage securely lashed to it. Jose Tomas rode inside the cage with his charge. To greet it on its arrival, Maria Hoyt flew from Havana to Miami. And not only was she in Port Everglades; she followed Toto to almost every city the circus visited during its long 1941 tour. The car ferry duly arrived at the port on February 19th. The circus flat car was then attached to a freight train for the ride to Sarasota. Perhaps it

Toto and Jose Tomas in her cage.



was the Seaboard Air Line which had the only cross-peninsula route. However there were problems with the feds.

On March 7, 1941 the United States Customs Service notified the circus that a whopping additional duty of \$7,875 was due for the importation of Toto. Reference was made to consumption entry no. H-88 filed by the circus at Port

Everglades on February 19th in which it had put an entry value of \$1,000 on the animal and paid a \$150 customs fee. However, the customs appraiser had valued Toto at \$8,750, which was the purchase price paid to Maria Hoyt. Since the appraised value exceeded the entry value by more than 100%, the local customs agent took the position that the entry forms executed by the circus were presumptively fraudulent. That triggered onerous forfeiture provisions provided by Section 489 of the Tariff Act of 1930. There were also issues as to whether the show should be allowed to keep Toto and if so under what amount of bond. The circus posted a bond, and Toto wound up going out with the circus as planned.

Ringling appealed the adverse decision of the Customs Service. A trial was held a year later in February 1942. Testimony was given by, among others, John North, Maria Hoyt, and Dr. William Mann, Director of the National Zoo in Washington, DC.

The law permitted animals imported for breeding purposes to be admitted duty free, Ringling felt that exemption should apply since Toto was to be bred to Gargantua. Another issue was "how to value a female gorilla." There was no market for such an animal and of the ten other gorillas then in the United States (including Gargantua) none were for sale. Hence there was no ascertainable value for Toto within the provisions of the Tariff Act. On this issue Dr. Mann's testimony was most helpful. [He was also an enthusiastic circus fan. Whether his credibility was challenged because of that bias

is unknown to us.] The testimony demonstrated that the circus had been quite open in dealing with the customs agents throughout. Therefore, there was no intention to defraud the United States within the meaning of the law, or so argued Ringling. The circus requested remission of the forfeitures.

On June 3, 1943 the court ruled against Ringling-Barnum. The show then appealed to the United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals. The brief of its attorney, John F. Reddy, Jr., dated in January 1944 outlines all the foregoing. [It may be found in the Parkinson Library at Circus World Museum.] In the end, the Court remitted the forfeiture and the duty wound up at some \$1,000, making Toto's total cost to the circus \$9760.92.

MR. AND MRS. GARGANTUA

This was the new schtick for press agent Roland Butler. He went right to work planning a gorilla wedding. It was to be held on February 22, 1941. The ever watchful Mrs. Hoyt was opposed to a "wedding" between her baby and Gargantua so soon after her pet had arrived at winter quarters. She figured Toto was too tired from her journey out of Havana. But she wound up attending, even bringing flowers for the "bride."

The nuptials were staged in a tent large enough to accommodate both of the big gorilla cages with enough room all around for the press corps. In order to arrange the "wedding," it had been necessary to modify the rear of Gargantua's cage no. 98. Up though 1940, it had been a solid metal piece. Now, however, an opening was cut into the rear corresponding to Gargantua's interior holding cage off his main exhibit room. A panel was installed that could be slid back. That way the big guy could see out through bars at the rear of the wagon. The new Toto cage was built that way from the start.

With Gargantua's no. 98 in position, a crawler tractor slowly backed Toto's cage into the tent so that it abutted the rear of the other. That way, at the propitious moment, each gorilla could see the other through the openings. A sign on the groom's



From 1943 to 1947 Mr. and Mrs. rode in one wagon, but in separate compartments.

wagon spelled "Gargantua the Great" and one on Toto's said, "Mrs. Gargantua the Great." As Toto's wagon came into the tent, a nearby public address speaker loudly played a recording of Richard Wagner's famous "Bridal Chorus" from his Lohengrin opera, popularly known as "Here Comes the Bride."

In her book Mrs. Hoyt recalled the "wedding," to wit: "In a special enclosure, Toto's air conditioned cage was wheeled up close to but not touching Gargantua's. Then the steel doors of the two wagons slid back, leaving the steel bars and a sufficient distance between them so that they could not reach each other, even by extending their arms.

"For a moment they stared at each other in surprise; then Toto barked in rage. I have never been able to understand why, but I'm sure that no swain ever received a more discouraging welcome than Gargantua did

Mrs. Hoyt bringing flowers to the wedding. John North is with her.



that day.

"Whatever was the reason, she would have none of him. When he thrust his hands through the bars, attempting to reach her in apparent friendliness, she stamped and barked furiously. When he threw a stalk of celery, left over from his breakfast, into her cage as a peace offering she hurled it back into his face. Tomas [who was in her cage] told her to throw a kiss at Gargy, but

she only stamped the more furiously. At last the great Gargantua, frustrated and hurt, retired to the farthest corner of his cage and sulked in silence, leaving Toto the delighted and undisputed master of the situation and center of attention, which was exactly what she wanted. After ten minutes, the doors were closed again and those who had expected to see a more exciting and romantic meeting went away disappointed."

Actually, it is not surprising that the encounter went awry. Neither gorilla had seen another of either sex in some time. For Gargantua it had been six years since Mrs. Hoyt sent Massa to the Philadelphia zoo. Toto had not seen another of her species since infancy, as far as we know. Gorillas are highly social animals. Husbandry now dictates that wherever possible they be kept in groups. That is the key to the gorilla breeding, which is now so successful in so many places. Presently there are some extraordinarily large groups of gorillas. In 2003 the commonly controlled Howlett's and Port Lympne zoos in England had no less than 71 gorillas between the two collections (a world record). At this writing (November 2006), the Bronx zoo had 28 gorillas and Zoo Atlanta 24. But in 1941 all of that was way off into the future.

Mr. and Mrs. Gargantua the Great became the darlings of the press corps. Their photo portrait was the feature of the newspaper ads and new posters were designed for them. A new twist in 1941 was to advertise them on the dark green delivery trucks of the Railway Express Agency. They roamed the streets of the large cities, rolling billboards advertis-



Pushing a cage into the pole-less gorilla tent in 1941.

ing the two gorillas.

John North went all out for his

white and blue, respectively. Costuming was lavish with pastel shades of many colors. All of this was met with loud applause by the public though many of the old time



The 1942 Gorilla Land entrance sign in front of the pole-less gorilla tent. Reynolds Archives.

1941 show. He employed famed industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes (1893-1958) to remake the circus. Bel Geddes was fresh from fame for his wildly acclaimed Futurama Exhibit (by General Motors) at the 1939 New York World's Fair. For Ringling he produced some of the most startling innovations ever seen in the American circus.

Bel Geddes completely re-designed Ringling's menagerie exhibit with such things as fluorescent lighting in shadow box-like cages with background scenery befitting the habitat of the animal in each. There was a monkey island, a raised giraffe exhibit platform, and double rows of elephants illuminated by blue lights. Additionally, tent tops became red, blue and yellow, and the wood shavings (sawdust) in each of the three rings was of a different color-red,

circus folks and fans thought it all too much. (We hear the same today vis-à-vis the so-called "new" or "high-brow" circuses.)

Bel Geddes saved his most dramatic circus statement for the 1941 gorilla exhibit. It was a revolutionary pole-less tent. Its dark blue canvas was suspended from four tall masts arranged in a square. It was positioned between the main menagerie tent and the big top. All patrons had to pass through it to get to the performance. The gorilla cages were lined up inside end-to-end. Folks could see Gargantua and Toto from either side and an elevated walkway was put on the outer sides so that people there could see over the heads of those in front. There was even a prelimi-

nary design for a pole-less big top. However, World War II intervened before that futuristic idea could be implemented

The pole-less gorilla tent was back for 1942. This time a large sign at its entrance described it as "Gorilla Land." A performance feature that year was "The Wedding of Gargantua and Toto" or "Bridal Bells Ring Out in Clownland." A clown parody, it was staged in the center ring with bride and groom in gorilla suits topped off by the arrival of a huge wedding cake in the form of a float drawn into the ring by a four horse team.

Unfortunately, the Gorilla Land exhibit lasted less than half the 1942 under canvas season. The pole-less tent, the two gorilla wagons, and both their occupants, came close to burning up on the Cleveland, Ohio lakefront on August 4, 1942. A disgruntled teenage boy, who had been discharged, took out his revenge by setting a fire in the menagerie tent. In twenty minutes it was gone and with it forty-five animals including all the camels and zebras, two of three giraffes, four of 45 elephants and various caged animals. Luckily the wind was blowing away from Gorilla Land and the big top. Men rushed to remove the canvas top over the gorillas, and they were saved.

The fire put an end to the pole less gorilla tent. A replacement menagerie tent was obtained, and it served for the remainder of the 1942 season. Because so many of the dead

Mr. and Mrs. poster first used in 1941.



animals had been exhibited in the center of the menagerie, there was now plenty of room there to line up the two gorilla cages end to end.

That was the way it was when your Atlanta author saw it in his home town on Tuesday, October 20, 1942. That day Gargantua was his usual stoic self but Toto put on a real show, swinging vigorously back and forth in her cage and blowing kisses to the people. In this she was egged on by a keeper whom I assume was Jose Tomas. The crowd loved it and crowded around her cage.

Alas by the time of the Atlanta engagement, Gargantua's long time caretaker, Richard Kroener, was dead. He had contracted cancer and passed away earlier in the 1942 season. His place with Gargantua was taken by a Julius Gerlick. However, he was soon called into the Army. Thereafter, Jose Tomas had charge of both gorillas. He would keep that job for the remainder of the lives of both gorillas.

WAR BOND GORILLAS

The year 1943 found Gargantua and Toto urging the purchase of War Bonds. Their familiar portrait poster was modified (at least on some of them) to show Toto holding a "BUY WAR BONDS" sign in her hand. By then she was referred to as "Madam Toto" or "M' Toto," for short.

America was now full throttle into the war effort, and its cost was staggering. While the conflict finally brought an end to the ever lingering Great Depression, now there were shortages in manpower, supplies, fuel, food, and equipment, plus travel restrictions. In January 1943 Ringling officials met with the Treasury Department in Washington and agreed to promote the sale of war bonds. In this the show was motivated by more than patriotism. After all, the feds had the final say on whether the show could operate at all that year.

That new season brought substantial changes to Ringling-Barnum. John North's five year agreement with the two Ringling ladies was over. They held the majority of the stock and voted him out. The new President was Robert Ringling, son



Toto's cage no. 97 in 1946, painted red with canvas awning to keep down the glass reflection. Reynolds Archives.

of original brother Charles and his wife Edith. John North foresaw major operating problems in 1943. He thought the show should either stay in winter quarters or travel around playing under military auspices. The majority disagreed and voted to take the show out on the road.



This "Buy War Bonds" poster was used in 1943.

The Office of Defense Transportation controlled the railroads, and had the authority to decide whether the circus could travel. As it turned out, permission was granted but with limitations. The show had to be reduced in size, using only three trains instead of the previous four. The separate menagerie tent was a casualty. However, it was decided to take the gorillas. By then they were totems symbolizing the Ringling circus. That was evidenced by the "Mr. and Mrs. Gargantua" posters that were again put on Railway Express Agency trucks in advance of 1943 dates. Your Atlanta author recalls seeing them on downtown streets

that year.

Gargantua and Toto also had to sacrifice for the War effort. They had to make do with less space. In 1943, both gorillas traveled in a single cage. No. 175 was selected, no doubt because it was the newer of the two. The c.17-foot main exhibition chamber was divided in two by a barred partition positioned laterally across its middle.

Gargantua rode on one side and Toto on the other. When word of the new arrangement got out, protests were made over keeping the gorillas in smaller quarters. As expected, Mrs. Hoyt was vocal. She was joined by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). The show assured one and all that the gorillas would not be harmed and every care would be given them. The single cage arrangement went forward, not only in 1943 but for the four seasons beyond that as well—through 1947.

For the 1943 field show, the gorilla cage was placed in an elongated entryway tent leading from the turnstiles to the big top. It was like a hallway, and it occupied the spot usually reserved for the big menagerie tent. Joining the gorillas there were chimpanzees in ape cage no. 67, also painted white.

And that was all the visitors saw by way of a menagerie exhibit. Your Atlanta author recalls the set up at the Monday matinee on October 18th. When one went through the turnstiles and into the hallway tent, the two cages were against the left sidewall with the right side of the tent given to souvenir stands and the like.

We should not give the impression that these were all the animals with the 1943 show. No, there were eight of the traditional menagerie cage wagons in the backyard plus five Bactrian camels and the elephants (26), a llama, and all the horses. That year the spectacle on the hippodrome track was called "Hold Your Horses," a replica of an old time street parade. The cages rolled around the track in

the parade. Other than that, however, they were not displayed, though one could see them if he could get into the backyard. Your Atlanta writer and his family managed to do that before and after the matinee. However, the area was roped off for the evening shows.

The menagerie was back in 1944, and thereafter the gorillas were exhibited in it. For the second time in two years, a terrible fire threatened the gorillas. We refer to the big top fire in Hartford, Connecticut on July 6, 1944, the worst disaster in American circus annals (167 audience members killed). Luckily for the gorillas and other animals, they were exhibited in a sidewalled menagerie off the right front corner of the burning big top, meaning that there was no tent top over the animals. Had there been, the fire might have spread to it and consumed the menagerie as well, like in Cleveland in 1942.

For most of three seasons (1944-46) the menagerie was sidewalled. This appears to have been due to a shortage of labor. The open air menagerie posed an exhibition problem for the gorillas. At matinees on bright sunny days the glass sides of the cage acted as mirrors reflecting the image of the onlookers instead of seeing the gorillas inside. [That would prove a problem for outdoor glass fronted zoo enclosures built in the 1950s as well--the Dallas, Texas zoo comes to mind.] Ringling attempted to solve the "reflection" problem by putting the wagon under a canopy or attaching an awning that extended out from the top of the cage. Folks could go underneath and see the gorillas in the shade it provided.

Up through 1943 the gorilla cages had always been painted white with gold trim. That changed in 1944 when it toured in red with white trim. The Robert Ringling faction (i.e. Edith acting through her son) was hell bent and determined to go back to "traditional circus," eschewing the novelties of John North. That extended to cage colors. So, beginning in 1944 the show opted for red painted cage wagons throughout. The gorilla cage was that color though 1946. It



Cages no. 98 and 97 side by side in 1949. Dominic Yodice collection.

went back to white for 1947.

For 1945 the Toto cage no. 175 was renumbered. It became no. 97. Previously nos. 97 and 99 had been assigned to other wagons; but for 1945 and thereafter, Toto's cage would be numbered in consecutiveness with Gargantua's cage no. 98.

GORILLAS IN WINTER

As was customary back then, most field shows took the winter off. In Ringling's case that was Sarasota, Florida where it had the most elaborate and sophisticated winter quarters in circus history. The show was there for about four months out of each year, the actual length depending on how late the circus stayed out in one year and how soon it embarked again the next. Beginning some three or four weeks after the show returned, it opened its winter quarters to the public. To garner at least some revenue, there was an admission charge. This was the time of the year when so-called "snow birds" arrived, tourists who flocked to sunny Florida from the frigid North. Thousands would tour the winter quarters on the weekends.

Visitors to winter quarters could take in the circus's zoo as well as rehearsals. However, an extra fee had to be paid to see Gargantua when he was first there and later to see both him and Toto. It appears that their two wagons were inside a tent with the fee being levied at the entrance.

Beginning with the winter of 1943-1944 the show dropped the extra fee for the gorillas. When your Atlanta author visited Sarasota in March 1953 and again during that same month in 1954 and 1955 there was no

separate charge to look at the gorillas. He expressly recalls that in 1955 they were shown in cage no. 98 under an old Main Entrance marquee top. It was staked out on the east side of the ring stock barn. Use of the top provided the shade which eliminated the glass reflection problem. The other cage no. 97 would carry them on the road that year.

When I was there it had just come out of the paint shop, all shiny with green paint and waiting to receive its anthropoid occupants.

When he first went there, this observer was rather surprised to find that there were no large indoor or outdoor cages so that the gorillas could gambol about in open air under the famous Florida sunshine. The other animals were afforded that amenity.

A monkey house had been built at winter quarters while the show was on the road in 1941. It was ready for occupancy in December 1941. [It replaced an earlier rudimentary one.] The new one was designed by Eric Hagenbeck, son of Lorenz Hagenbeck (1882-1956) and grandson of Carl Hagenbeck (1844-1913), all of them from Hamburg, Germany and famed for their bar-less zoo exhibits. On its east and south sides outdoor cages were attached. They were of the aviary sort, typical of zoo buildings of that time. Chimpanzees and orangutans were kept there. On the west side of the house was a large monkey island surrounded by a water filled moat. There, such primates as diana monkeys disported themselves on gunite rocks and in trees. In the surrounding moat could be found, from time to time, the show's pygmy hippo, and at other times otters. However, there was no way this building could accommodate adult gorillas.

There was talk of erecting a gorilla building 1941. [See: *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, November 24, 1941.] However America was soon plunged into the war and there was no way such a house or much of anything else could be built until the conflict was over. The show again addressed the matter of a permanent gorilla facility in 1949. On June 18th of that year

Henry North wrote the show's Lloyd Morgan. He was a jack of all trades around the circus, including lot superintendent and later general manager. Said North, "Dear Lloyd--Please start figuring on the construction at winter quarters of an outdoor enclosure for Toto and Gargantua. We should have some sort of arrangement where they could get out of the sunshine during the day and back into their respective cages for sleeping at night."

M'Toto's self appointed guardian, Maria Hoyt, then got into the discussion. On August 30, 1949 she wrote Henry North, urging the circus to build a "Gorilla Palace" in the winter quarters. She enclosed a design sketch. It included a large patio divided into two compartments, one for each gorilla. It would have a high retractable roof that could be opened to the sky in good weather. There would be indoor chambers that could be heated, one on each side of the patio for the respective gorillas. The public was to view the animals in either the patio or their rooms, separated from the animals by glass with bars on the gorillas' side. We can find no evidence that Mrs. Hoyt offered to pay any part of what would have been a very expensive undertaking.

None of these facilities were ever built. It should be pointed out that, in reality, the circus's air conditioned gorilla cage-wagons were not much smaller than the cages in which zoos kept gorillas at the time. They were often sterile and fronted by glass. Even today, zoo gorillas that enjoy huge open enclosures during the day, spend their nights and frigid days (i.e., half their lives) in off-exhibit cages that are really quite small.

BABY GORILLAS

After World War II, the popularity of Gargantua and Toto began to slip. Something new was needed.

Baby gorillas would be the answer. They could be "adopted" by Mr. and Mrs. Gargantua. Howard Y. Bary, a scout for circus novelties and one time show owner, was sent to Africa by Ringling to find attractions, including baby gorillas. He wrote John North on May 11, 1947 from Leopoldville, Belgian Congo as follows. "When the Baby Gorilla permits are finally cleared and they will

be, it will be necessary to take a truck and trailer into the Gorilla Country, which is located in a section where there are no air fields of any kind even for small air craft. The figures for truck hire to enter French Equatorial Africa [gorilla country] are even more inflated than the Belgian Congo ones."

Bary did not get any baby gorillas. John North then turned to Carr Hartley, an animal catcher-dealer based in Rumuriti, Kenya, writing him on September 13, 1947, as follows, "I am interested in securing some baby gorillas to be adopted by Gargantua and Toto, our full-grown pair of gorillas, which we have had with the circus for many years. Would it be possible for you to procure at least one or more if possible... for arrival in New York, before March 20, 1948. I would have to know, of course, much sooner than that whether or not I was going to receive one or more."



Martha Hunter and the two babies. Reynolds Archives.

Nothing came of that inquiry either. Interestingly, by 1947 John North was once again moving back into circus management. In a palace coup of sorts, he regained control of the circus in the fall of 1947 and, in the process, came away owning fifty-one percent of the stock. Thereafter, he was firmly in charge, aided by his brilliant and acutely efficient general manager, Arthur M. Concello.

In the spring of 1949, Ringling moved in earnest to secure baby gorillas. They were coming out of West Africa in increasing numbers. Four youngsters had arrived in American zoos in 1948 alone and the annual importations rose steadily thereafter. What's more they were arriving in healthy condition. That was aided in no small measure by the use of air travel.

Ringling deputized one Eric Lutten of Douala, Cameroon, French West Africa to work with Philip Carroll in collecting baby gorillas. However, Lutten's primary assignment was to get some of the Sara tribespeople of Chad, famed for their saucer lipped women. They had been called "Ubangis" in their 1930 and 1932 exhibitions by Ringling. Lutten failed in that as had Howard Bary in 1947 and as would McCormick Steele in 1954.

Carroll was an America animal collector. In April 1949 he sent John North photos of baby gorillas he had in Cameroon, calling them "Gargantua's pups." Carroll worked closely with New York dealer Henry Trefflich (1908-1978). Trefflich, a native of Hamburg, Germany, operated a lucrative animal dealership and exotic pet store at 228 Fulton St., Manhattan. Ringling made a deal with Trefflich to supply four baby gorillas. Carroll succeeded and sent them to Trefflich in July 1949. However, owing to trouble with the export permit from the French authorities, the circus could not take delivery of them.

To resolve this problem Henry North again contacted the influential Washington lawyer, Melvin Hildreth (mentioned above). North wrote him on September 21, 1949 as follows:

"Apparently certain rules and regulations have been promulgated by the authorities in the game regions of Africa which prohibit the issuance of certificates for the exportation of wild animals to other than accredited zoological concerns. For example, we spent considerable money in partially financing and furnishing a jeep to Phillip Carroll, one of Henry Trefflich's agents. Carroll went to Africa, specifically to obtain four

baby gorillas for us. He obtained the four gorillas, brought them back to this country, but then was unable to obtain a certificate of export from the French Africa authorities, said authorities stating that they were governed by some sort of international agreement in which it was set forth that exports could only be made to recognized zoological institutions.

"As a result we have to date not received our four baby gorillas, three of which were delivered to Mrs. Belle Benchley, the director of the San Diego Zoo. This seems pretty unjust to me as our zoo is a better known one than practically any other zoo in the world and our record for the care and maintenance of our animals stacks up favorably against any zoological garden. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Benchley has lost more gorillas than I like to think about.

"I am wondering if there is some way you can get us official recognition as a zoological organization. As you know, we pioneered in the care and maintenance of gorillas. Perhaps Dr. Mann [National Zoo] can help us in this matter. It is highly important to us."

Hildreth went to work on the matter, dealing with the French Embassy. On September 26, 1949 he wired Henry North as follows:

"French Embassy recognizes that the Ringling Brothers menagerie is outstanding as a zoological institution. Confident matter can be adjusted."

As a result, the circus got two baby gorillas, male and female. They were landed by Trefflich in mid-November 1949. His November 16th bill of sale to Ringling recited a purchase price of \$9,000 for the pair. They were examined by Leonard Goss, a veterinarian with the Bronx zoo. He pronounced them in fine health. At the time the show was still on the road so a deal was made to board the little animals at Trefflich's for \$50 per week. Ringling was also granted an option to buy two more gorillas by the end of 1949, but it was never exercised. Two would have to do.

A December 11, 1949 incident at Trefflich's prompted the show to have the baby gorillas shipped to Sarasota immediately. A monkey had gotten

loose inside the building and opened a water faucet on the top floor of the place. The mischief went undetected until the lower floors were awash. Ringling's New York attorney, William Granger (Leonard Bisco's firm), thought Trefflich's a poor and dangerous place to keep them. He wrote Henry North on December 12th urging him to remove them.

According to the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* of December 15, 1949 the two babies were flown that day from New York to Sarasota to take up their circus careers. They were kept initially in the 1941 ape-monkey house described earlier, being exhibited on the side with the outdoor aviary style cages.

The new gorillas were named Gargantua II and Mademoiselle Toto, "Mlle. Toto" for short. Though Gargantua was supposed to adopt them, he did not live long enough.

"GARGANTUA DIES"

That was the headline that made front page newspapers around the country on Saturday morning November 26, 1949. The gorilla had died around 8:00 a. m. the day before (25th) in Miami, Florida. That was the last day of the season and big guy failed by hours of making the last two shows of that tour. He had spent twelve years with Ringling-Barnum. Photos were published everywhere of his body lying face down on the floor of his cage. Henry North and keeper Jose Tomas were shown kneeling over his body.

At the time Gargantua was traveling in his original cage, no. 98. John North had brought it out of retirement in 1948 so that, for his last two seasons, he rode in it while Toto occupied her no. 97. For 1949 the show decorated its menagerie with a jungle theme. The cages were painted with palm trees. "Palm tree tops" on panels extended above their roof lines. Lettering

through the palms atop each of the gorilla cages spelled "Mr. Gargantua" and "Mrs. Gargantua," respectively. The base color of the two cages was white.

Your Atlanta writer saw Gargantua here on November 10th, just two weeks before his death. He lay listless on the floor of his cage. Little did I realize that he was dying. Dr. J. Y. "Doc" Henderson, the circus veterinarian (Texas A&M University), knew he had a terribly sick ape on his hands. He wrote about the final illness and death in his 1951 book, *Circus Doctor*. He could not get close enough to Gargantua to take his temperature, get his blood pressure, listen to his heart and lungs, or check his teeth and gums. Proper diagnosis was impossible. That was long before we had the dart system for injecting sophisticated immobilization and tranquilization drugs. Those are routinely used today to successfully examine, and treat gorillas and other large exotic animals. But that is now--not 1949.

All Doc Henderson could do was mix drugs into his food. He managed to get some penicillin, Aureomycin, and nicotinic acid into his stomach, but nothing seemed to work. He was afraid to feed him Nembutal. Though that would knock him out so he could be examined and treated, Henderson did not know the correct dose. That depended on the ratio of body weight to fat which could only be guessed.

The wrong amount could kill him. Dr. William Mann of the National

Henry North and Jose Tomas with the dead Gargantua.



Zoo came down from Washington to visit the show in November, likely in North Carolina which was as close to Washington as it would get at the end of that season. The ape was near the end. Both Mann and Henderson could only look at the big guy and sadly reflect that the nature of the animal made it impossible for them to help him.

As soon as he died, Gargantua's body was packed in dry ice and flown to Baltimore for a necropsy at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. On November 30, 1949 its Dr. Adolph A. Schultz reported to Henry Ringling that the cause of death was bilateral lobar pneumonia. Additionally he had grossly abnormal kidneys and badly decayed wisdom teeth. This had no doubt weakened him allowing the pneumonia to set in. The skeleton went to the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University.

never have been in a cage, he needed air and sunshine. He was just a great big lonely thing who didn't know his own strength and he spent his life locked up." However, that seems a bit strange since she was a contributor to the design of his cage wagon no. 98. Gertrude Lintz would outlive Gargantua by another two decades, dying in a hospital in North Miami, Florida on Labor Day 1968.

THREE GORILLAS

The babies, Mlle. Toto and Gargantua II, were a feature of the 1950 season along with old M'Toto. The youngsters were displayed in the Gargantua cage no. 98. M'Toto was in her original cage no. 97. Faithful Jose Tomas looked after her.

One Martha Hunter was hired to care for the babies. While the audience was in the menagerie tent before the shows, she would dress in a white nurse's uniform, and go into

the cage to feed the babies and entertain them. They were sometimes taken from their cage to be exercised and to demonstrate how to care for them. All of that was a real crowd pleaser.

Ms. Hunter remained with the circus during the 1950 season. She left the show during the Los Angeles engagement on September 10-16, 1951 following disagreements with the show management. Mrs. Ruth F. White, who had been with the

changing with television the looming monster. Concello ordered a reduction in the size of the show.

Ten cars were cut from the 1951 train. The separate menagerie tent was a casualty. In its place the big top was lengthened by sixty feet and the extra space housed a reduced menagerie in the round end where the patrons entered. In this set up there was no room for both of the big gorilla cages in either the menagerie display or on the circus train. So, Toto stayed behind in Sarasota in her no. 97 under the care of Tomas.

The two babies went out in 1951 riding in the original no. 98. That was the year when Cecil B. DeMille's Academy Award winning movie was filmed on the circus. Its title, quite naturally, was *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Charlton Heston played the role of the hard boiled general manager. The gorilla babies made several cameo appearances as did John North. The lure of Gargantua was still so strong that in one scene, when the executives were trying to figure what to do for a star attraction, one of them said, "What are we going to do, bring back Gargantua" (or similar words), as he pointed to a portrait of the big guy hanging on the wall.

The two babies toured again in 1952 while M'Toto remained in Sarasota. In 1953 the two youngsters again set out riding in no. 98. However, they made only the first two dates, the indoor ones in New York and Boston. The reason was that Mlle. Toto was developing paralysis in her limbs. She had to be sent back to Sarasota. Since Gargantua II also rode in the same wagon, he went back too. Washington, D. C. (May 19, 1953) was the first date under tents. The gorillas departed from there. Thus, for the first time since 1937 Ringling's field show did not exhibit a gorilla.

With Toto doing nothing but living off the circus at winter quarters, Art Concello planned to sell her. The air conditioning unit on her cage (no. 97) had burned out. The cost of replacing it seems to have been the triggering event. Jose Tomas got wind of it and immediately contacted Mrs. Hoyt. The call came the night before she was to fly to Europe. Terribly upset, on July 31, 1952 she penned a letter to John North from the Grand Hotel



The Miami Herald's front page coverage of Gargantua's death.

The news of Gargantua's death brought an outpouring of letters to the circus. Among those expressing condolences were R. Marlin Perkins of the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, Dr. William Mann of the National Zoo, and a then-young lad in Buffalo, New York named Clayton Freiheit who is now the Director of the Denver Zoo.

Mrs. Gertrude Lintz, Gargantua's original owner, was quoted in a newspaper account, thusly, "I'm sorry he lived as long as he did. He should

Colorado Springs Zoo, then took over as the babies' keeper. She seems to have remained with the circus only through the end of the 1951 season. The route book for 1952 listed a Virgil R. King as heading the gorilla department. Jose Tomas was in Sarasota.

Big changes were in store for the Ringling circus beginning in 1951. The ever sharp (some might say callous) General Manager, Art Concello, saw diminishing prospects down the road. Operating costs were soaring in every respect. The supply of low paid, hard working quality workers was drying up, and public tastes were

de L'Europe in Bad Gastein, Austria. She begged and pleaded with him to keep Toto. In part she wrote as follows, "I thought that in spite of different opinions [with Concello], it was still you who decided such things [as opposed to Concello]. I felt Toto secure with you, who like her, a thing that certainly cannot be said about Mr. Concello . . . I am quite willing to pay for the repairs on Toto's cage, if that is what made Mr. Concello mad--the air conditioning was completely burned out and had to be fixed--and also help in any other way that might be necessary--only don't sell Toto!!!"

From all we can glean, Hoyt was correct about Concello. He was no fan of the circus menagerie, feeling that it was not cost justified. That comes through in his 1973 interview with the late Tom Parkinson, published after Concello's death [See: *Bandwagon*, September-October, 2001].

As a result of all this, Toto was sold. But not to a stranger! The buyer was none other than Mrs. Maria Hoyt. A contract was executed on July 19, 1953. The terms called for Mrs. Hoyt to pay the circus \$5,000 for Toto, her cage (no. 97), and other equipment. The payment was to be made in two installments of \$2,500 each. The first was made upon execution of the agreement by both parties. The second was to be made in Havana, Cuba on or before December 31, 1953. Title to Toto and the cage wagon passed to Mrs. Hoyt when the contract was executed. However, delivery was to be delayed. The circus allowed Mrs. Hoyt to keep the gorilla at its winter quarters until December 3, 1954. Should the show play a winter date in Havana at the end of 1954 [as it had done every winter beginning in December 1949], then the circus would bring Toto and her cage with it when the other wagons were ferried to the island. In case there was no Havana date at the end of 1954, Hoyt was to remove the gorilla and her cage from the winter quarters by December 31, 1954. Until delivery of the animal to Hoyt, Jose Tomas was to continue to care for Toto with his salary paid by Mrs. Hoyt.

However, Toto never left the Ringling circus. She remained with it until she died, even though Mrs.

Obviously, therefore, the aforesaid



Toto and Maria Hoyt. Hoyt collection.

agreement was modified by a subsequent one we have not seen.

When last we visited Mlle. Toto (one of the 1949 babies), she was suffering from paralysis. Once back in Sarasota in May 1953 she was treated but without much improvement. Brain surgery was performed. The operation was conducted in Sarasota winter quarters on February 6, 1954 under hospital conditions with all the necessary equipment. Dr. Mason Trupp a surgeon from Tampa, performed the procedure assisted by five other physicians and a veterinarian. It lasted four and half hours. The gorilla was sedated with nitrous oxide gas and a barbiturate. Dr. Trupp removed brain tissue for examination. The surgery made national news. The operation cured the young gorilla somewhat but she was never really well thereafter.

Old Madam Toto went out again in 1954 for the first time in four years. She was in her cage no. 97 even though Mrs. Hoyt owned both ape and cage at that time. Sharing the wagon with her was Gargantua II. The evidence is somewhat uncertain, however, as to whether Mlle. Toto went on the road in 1954 as well. A number of observers and documents say she was out. However, when your Atlanta author caught the circus in his home town on November 1, 1954, he counted only two gorillas, M'Toto and Gargantua II. Perhaps the young female was temporarily out of the cage at that time. There is no doubt about 1955. All three gorillas

rode in no. 97.

When plans for 1954 and the future seasons were being discussed at the end of 1953, Art Concello argued for even further reductions in the size of the show. He wanted to slash another twenty railroad cars down to fifty. North refused to go along and defiantly stated that he would go the other way and expand. Concello saw that as unmanageable and resigned on December 3, 1953. The 1954 show went out on seventy cars as before but for 1955 North added back the ten railroad cars that had been cut four years earlier. He also reinstated the separate menagerie tent.

The 1955 season was the finale for Mlle. Toto. The three gorillas went to Havana for the 1955-56 winter show. Dr. William Y. Higgins, another circus veterinarian, told your Atlanta writer that she died while in Cuba for that engagement. That was the end of Ringling-Barnum as a three gorilla show.

END OF THE BIG TOP

In 1956 Toto and Gargantua II were again taken on the road in cage no. 97. But that tour came to an abrupt end. It stumbled along on the verge of collapse until it could go no further. The Greatest Show on Earth folded its big top for the last time in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on July 16, 1956. The circus (with the two gorillas) limped home to Sarasota and tried to figure out what to do next. Art Concello's prediction had proved correct.

The answer was to switch to indoor arenas. They were then springing up everywhere but until there were enough of them to play a full indoor season, Ringling also had to do open air dates in various stadia around the country. As for the menagerie and the gorillas, they were still considered important for the long date in New York's Madison Square Garden. Many New Yorkers had never seen the show under canvas; and since it had always presented a menagerie in the Garden, they expected it.

To reframe the circus as an indoor and stadia show, John North went with hat in hand to Art Concello and begged him to rejoin the circus. The steely general manager drove a hard

bargain. If he was to save Ringling-Barnum, he insisted on complete control, and he got it.

Riding in no. 97 the two gorillas were shown at New York and Boston at the start of the 1957 season after which they were returned to Sarasota. They and the rest of the menagerie rode up and back on circus flat cars. The next year the gorillas and other cages again went to New York on circus flat cars. Ever resourceful, Concello then decided to lease the gorillas to another show. That would have been unthinkable just ten years earlier.

ROYAL AMERICAN

The Royal American Shows was America's largest railroad carnival, a show equivalent in size to Ringling-Barnum. It was owned by Carl Sedlmayr Sr. and Jr. and was based in Tampa, Florida.

After the 1958 New York date, old Toto and Gargantua II, both riding in cage no. 97, were shipped to Royal American in Memphis, Tennessee arriving on May 15th. A system flat car was used, meaning one owned by the railroad instead of the circus. We know it was not a Ringling car because all the ones sent to New York in 1958 remained there. Photos of no. 97 on the Royal American train tell us that it was still in its original circus wagon configuration, not a semi-trailer.

Rudy Bundy was a former big band leader. He was a good friend of John North, so much so that he was given a position with the circus. On April 18, 1958 Art Concello sent a memorandum to Bundy stating as follows, "I have made arrangements with Sedlmayr to send the two gorillas, Tomas and Greasy Joe [apparently a cage boy] to Royal American Shows at Memphis, Tennessee. They will keep and exhibit the gorillas all summer and return them to Sarasota after they close sometime in November.

"The deal is as follows: 30% must be paid to the fair committee. After this 30% is paid the following will come off the top: Tomas' salary, Greasy Joe's salary and the salary of one talker-ticket seller out

front.

"Sedlmayr agrees to repair and put in shape the wagon in first-class condition and keep it in first-class condition. He is to build a front and transport it around the country.

"We are to furnish a blue and white tent we had at winter quarters. Sedlmayr agrees to pay whatever cost there is from New York City to Memphis.

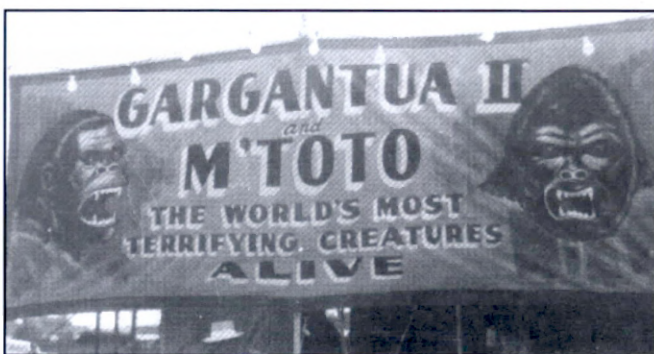
"After all this is taken care of, whatever is left we are to split 50/50."

On April 21, 1968 Concello sent this memo to Harold D. "Tuffy" Genders, his right hand man, "I have made a deal with Sedlmayr to send the gorillas to Royal American Shows. Also agreed to furnish blue and white plastic tent that was up at the far end of the menagerie building. So if this tent needs any work on it, Leif [Leif Osmundsen the tent maker] had better put it in good shape. Sedlmayr will pick it up. I plan on shipping gorilla wagon from New York to Memphis via a flat car."

On May 15, 1958 Sedlmayr wrote to Art Concello saying, "Just a note to let you know that the gorillas arrived here this morning safely. Jo-Jo didn't like the train ride down and has disappeared and not returned at this writing. Tomas says not to worry as he will get along okay and we will get someone else to take Jo-Jo's place if he fails to show up.

"I have added the change in the contract re-garding the feed, medicine (of gorillas) and the \$25 weekly stateroom for Tomas. The freight bill was \$1,089, so you can see that the railroads are doing okay and then Tomas had to pay an additional \$92

Banner in front of gorilla show on Royal American. Al Stencell collection.



for tickets for himself and Jo-Jo, which our office has reimbursed Tomas."

Toto and Gargantua II were back with Royal American in 1959 again in cage no. 97. This time they were sent from New York to the carnival on one of two flat cars sold to it by the circus. At the end of Royal American's 1959 season, the gorillas went back to Ringling's Sarasota winter quarters.

GORILLAS TO VENICE

During 1960 Ringling-Barnum quit its Sarasota winter home in favor of a new one in Venice, Florida, some eighteen miles to the south. The two gorillas, Gargantua II and old Madam Toto, went there as well. Both of their cages were then of a green color with palm trees painted on their corners. In the 1960s both were converted into semi-trailers with fifth wheels so as to be pulled by highway tractors. That had become the most feasible way to take them around the country. Though we do not have convincing evidence as to which one was converted first, it was likely no. 97. That comports with the recollection of Dominic Yodice of Hollis, New York. He has made a study of the Ringling-Barnum engagements in Madison Square Garden, with particular focus on the wagons utilized. According to him no. 97 was used there every year from 1956 until through 1964. The conversion to the semi-trailer was probably made in advance of the 1960 New York date. By then the circus had quit using its old flat cars.

When the two wagons with their apes were first in Venice winter quarters, they were spotted under a tent on the southern side of the new arena building. At that time one of the cages still had its smaller wheels from the rail show days. We think that was likely no. 98.

By 1964 the circus was playing dates in the South before going to New York. Concello had figured that it was a waste of money to travel 1,200 miles to New York for the opener when there were bucks to be made en route up there.

The Venice *Goldolier* for January 9, 1964 informed

us that the gorillas were sent to Miami Beach to promote the show's opening there on the 16th. Later they were taken to New York for the seven week engagement, which began at Madison Square Garden on March 24th. After that no. 97 was sent to John North's Continental Circus, staged at the New York World's Fair on Long Island. The 1964 World's Fair stint began with both gorillas being

shown in no. 97. However, the crowds around the single cage were so thick that old no. 98 was made highway ready, and it too went to the Fair where one of the gorillas was switched into it. As it turned out that was the last time both of the old gorilla cages were shown together on the road, each exhibiting a gorilla.

When the Fair was over, the two semis returned the gorillas to Venice where they moved into a new building. It was built during the summer of 1964 just north of the arena, replacing the tent that had earlier served that purpose. To call it a gorilla house is overly generous. It consisted of a concrete floored, metal roofed, open sided barn for the two gorilla semi-trailers. The public could view the animals from outside the barn. There was a canvas flap that could be lowered on the viewing side. Your Atlanta author saw it like that, "flap down," when he was there with his family in August 1966. Though the canvas was lowered we could still see gorillas moving around inside. It was my last glimpse of old Toto and our two oldest boys first and only look at her.

In 1965 a new stainless steel gorilla cage was built by Gene Vercheski, the owner of G & G Metals Fabricating Company of Venice, Florida. He had done a lot of work for Ringling at the Venice winter quarters. It too was air conditioned by Carrier. The new cage was constructed as a semi-trailer. For 1965 it took the two gorillas to the Garden date followed by a stint at the World's Fair, then in its second year. On its way back south, Jose Tomas took it to Charlotte, North Carolina,



The 1965 semi cage in Madison Square Garden. Bill Hall collection.

where the circus played on November 10-14. There the gorillas were exhibited as an added attraction.

For 1966 (and ever thereafter) the Vercheski-built semi hauled the gorillas around. When the 1966 New York date was done, it went back to Venice where old Toto was dropped off. It then took Gargantua II to Texas for dates in Houston and Dallas. By then Nos. 97 and 98 had been retired from travel.

ADIOS FOR TWO

Madam Toto died at Ringling's Venice winter quarters on July 28, 1968. She was then thirty-six years old, quite good for gorilla longevity. quite good for gorilla longevity. By then Mrs. Maria Hoyt had moved to Sarasota to be near her beloved ape.

The stainless steel cage in Long Beach, California in 1965 or 1966. Bob MacDougall photo.



Toto was buried in Sarasota's Sandy Lane Kennels Pet Cemetery and her grave got its largest tombstone. At Mrs. Hoyt's direction, the inscription reads, "Sleep well my darling companion--You will always be remembered."

Mrs. Hoyt herself did not live long afterwards. She died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident in Vienna, Austria in the summer of 1969.

Interestingly Toto's last circus days were spent under new Ringling ownership. On November 11, 1967 John North and the other Ringling shareholders sold out to a consortium comprised of the Feld brothers, Irvin and Israel (Washington D.C. based impresarios) and of Judge Roy Hofheinz (former mayor of Houston and builder of its trend-setting Astrodome complex). Closing of the sale was theatrically staged in Rome's ancient Colosseum.

For 1969 the new owners created a second Ringling circus, calling it the Blue Unit while the other was called the Red. Both were of equal size. Gargantua II was now the only gorilla owned by the circus. His handlers called him "Tony." A truly impressive male, he had far outgrown his namesake, the original Gargantua. And he still toured. After New York in 1969 with the new Red Unit, he was sent to Houston to appear in a long engagement by the Blue show at the Astrohall.

Tony (nee Gargantua II) died on February 12, 1972 at the Venice winter quarters. The body was sent to the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia where a necropsy was performed. Ringling then had the body mounted. For that they hired taxidermist Joseph Hurt in nearby Stone Mountain, Georgia. He had been a curator of Atlanta's Fernbank Science Center. The job took five weeks. To dry the mounted figure, Hurt put it outside in the sun on his driveway. That caused quite a traffic jam

in Hurt's normally quite neighborhood.

Toward the end of 1972, Hurt and his Assistant, Mike Thompson, put the mounted gorilla in a van and drove him to Ringling headquarters in Washington, D.C. They also took along a huge glass exhibit case made by Fred Mortenson, a local cabinet maker. The mounted Gargantua II was displayed in the circus office.

In 1973, the Felds opened a theme park near Haines City, Florida (Orlando area). They called it "Circus World." The mounted Gargantua II was later sent there where it became a prominent display. The park was never successful and went through a succession of owners. Ultimately, the circus material was sold at a Guernsey's auction in February 1985. The mounted Gargantua II was bid in for \$20,350 or more than twice what he and Mlle. Toto had cost when purchased by the circus in 1949 as live animals. The successful bidder was one Jon Elmo, an interior designer. He must have been acting for the Feld organization (i.e. the Ringling circus) because the mounted animal wound up prominently displayed at their offices in Vienna, Virginia. It was still there at last account.

MICKEY

In early 1971 Ringling bought a small male gorilla named Mickey. He would be the show's last gorilla. The idea was to make him a companion for Gargantua II. Both went that year to Madison Square Garden with the Blue Unit for its May 18-31 date in Gotham. They rode in the Vercheski-built stainless steel semi-trailer cage, Gargantua II in one end and Mickey in the other. The youngster was featured in the printed program which called him "Phineas T." He was sometimes called Gargantua III as well.

Mickey, a/k/a Phineas T., likely went with the Blue Unit to its 1972 Garden date beginning on March 28th because he is mentioned again that year in its program. However, if he did go, he was by himself. Gargantua II had died the month before. As far as we can ascertain, that was the last time a gorilla was



Mickey in Venice quarters with his handler Joe Goddu in 1971. Reynolds Archives.

exhibited out on the road with the Ringling circus.

The scene now switches to the Feld owned Circus World theme park at Haines City. Mickey was there from 1973 to 1975, exhibited in the stainless steel semi-trailer cage.

C. P. "Chappie" Fox was long associated with the other Circus World, the Museum of that name in Baraboo of which he was the Director. In 1972 he joined the Feld organization and was assigned to its Florida theme

park. Chappie told your Atlanta author this story: Around 1975 Irvin Feld came to him and told him the show really needed to get out of the gorilla business. He asked for Chappie's advice about where he might send Mickey. Chappie told him he knew just the place, Mae Noell's chimp farm at Palm Harbor, Florida near Tarpon Springs. [She and her husband Bob had had run it since 1954.] Chappie told Feld that she was an expert in caring for apes including gorillas. So, Mickey went there.

The exact arrangement between Ringling and Noell is unknown to us but Mickey was apparently placed there on loan. Noell also got from Ringling both the old no. 98 gorilla cage from 1938 and the stainless steel one built in 1965.

For 1976 Mickey and the two gorilla cages were leased by Ringling to circus owner L. B. "Hoxie" Tucker. Chappie Fox said the arrangement prevented Tucker from using either the "Phineas T." or "Gargantua III" names for Mickey.

Hoxie Tucker put two truck shows on the road in 1976, his namesake Hoxie Bros. Circus and the Great American Circus. Both carried gorillas. Tucker gave Mickey the stage name "Kongo" and placed him on Great American using the 1965 stainless steel semi-trailer cage to haul him around and exhibit him. The other gorilla was named Gori and was owned by Noell. Gori had

The Gargantua cage on Hoxie Bros. Circus in 1976.





The 1965 semi-trailer cage on Hoxie's Great American Circus in 1976.

once belonged to Maria K. Berosini. Tucker gave him the showbiz name "Mongo." He went on the Hoxie Bros. circus riding in the old 1938 Ringling cage. It kept its original 98 number.

Late in 1976 Tucker bought a gorilla named King from Berosini. That meant he no longer had to lease Kongo (nee Mickey) from Ringling. So at the end of the 1976 season, Hoxie sent him back to Mae Noel. For 1977 he used King in Mickey's place on Great American, putting the Kongo moniker on him as well. King was with the Hoxie Bros circus in 1979 after which he was sold to Monkey Jungle in Miami. Founded in 1933, it is privately owned and operated by the DuMond family. At last account King was still there.

As time wore on a disagreement arose between Mae Noell and Ring-

Bob Snowden with his Toto cage. Snowden photo.



ling over boarding fees for maintaining Mick-ey. The upshot seems to have been that Noell got title to Mickey and the two cages semis.

According to the *International Gorilla Studybook*, in November 1983 Mickey was sent from Noell to the Jombolair Ranch near Ocala. It was owned by the eccentric multi-millionaire Arthur Jones, developer of the Nautilus exercise machines. He and his ranch gained world wide fame in July 1984 when he flew a Boeing 747 from Zimbabwe to Jumbolair with a plane-load of 63 young African elephants. His ranch had an 8,000 foot runway that could land the 747. He also had white rhinos and the largest crocodile in captivity.

Jones built a special enclosure for Mickey who lived at Jombolair until his death on September 15, 1988. At that time he weighed 495 pounds. Thus ended the saga of the gorillas exhibited by the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. But not its gorilla wagons, to which we now turn.

WAGON WHEREABOUTS

For a decade after the original Gargantua cage (no. 98) was last used in 1976 by Hoxie Tucker, it sat rusting away in the sun at Noell's Chimp Farm in Palm Harbor, Florida. It was badly deteriorated and the air conditioning

system had been removed. Then Greg Parkinson, Paul Ingrassia and Chappie Fox got interested. The first two were officials of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin and Fox was its former director. They were well aware of the cage's historic significance in exhibiting the greatest circus animal attraction of the twentieth century.

Fox knew Mae Noell quite well and negotiations got underway. The cage wound up being purchased by Paul Ingrassia, Chappie Fox, and two others closely allied with the Museum, Jim Kieffer and Fred D. Pfening III. The four owners subsequently donated the cage to the Museum.



The front of the gorilla show on Great American.

The cage was trucked to Baraboo and unloaded on the Museum's grounds on June 2, 1987 (photo in the Museum's Newsletter, October 1987).

In time it was beautifully restored to its original condition using drawings from Ringling. The work cost \$25,000 and was funded by the Frieda and William Hunt Foundation of Milwaukee, John Seaman, Jr., Trustee. In 1993 Gargantua cage no. 98 made its debut, riding the Museum's circus train to Milwaukee for the annual exhibit at the Great Circus Parade Show-grounds on the Milwaukee lakefront.

The next year (1994) an animatronic Gargantua was added. The work was arranged by William Morris of the Morris Costume

Company and executed by William Burnett. He was a Hollywood special effects designer who had done the animatronic apes for the 1988 movie *Gorillas in the Mist*. Burnett did a superb job. It was quite lifelike down to the last detail including Gargantua's famous snarl caused by the damage to his lip. The figure looks more real than mounted (or stuffed) specimens.

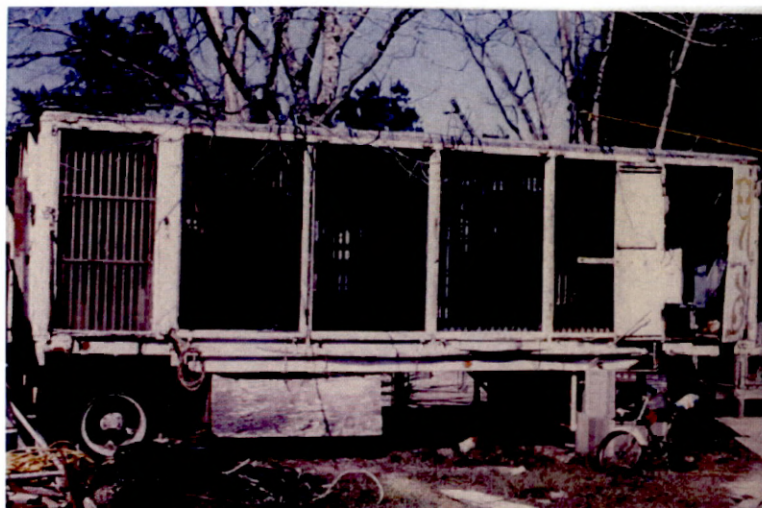
Though Gargantua's no. 98 was saved, fate was not so kind to the other two Ringling gorilla cages.

The 1965 Vercheski-built stainless steel semi-trailer cage remained at Noell's Chimp Farm until around 2003. It was parked in the back of the property. Mae died in October 2000 and Bob Noell had predeceased her. The Chimp Farm fell on hard times. A group of volunteers in the early 2000s took over its control, forming the Suncoast Primate Sanctuary, Inc. as a not for profit corporation. While cleaning up the place and replacing the old rusty cages, the former Ringling-Barnum cage and some other old semi-trailers were junked and sent to the scrap yard.

The original 1941 Toto cage no. 97 had been sold earlier. A March 1971 writing on a Ringling-Barnum letterhead stated, "Sold to Capital City Shows [a carnival]-one used semi-trailer used as a gorilla cage, complete with motor-generator, by the owner Jose Tomas of Sarasota."

As we pointed out above, in 1953 Mrs. Hoyt bought the 97 cage from Ringling though the circus continued to use it. We think Tomas must have inherited it following her death in 1969. Use of the Ringling letterhead may signify nothing more than a memo by which the circus recorded the wagon's disposition since it was likely stored at Venice winter quarters at the time.

Capital City Shows must have wanted the wagon for a monkey exhibit since a baboon came with it when the carnival sold the cage. The purchaser was showman Bob



No. 98 cage at Noell's Chimp Farm prior to being sold to the Baraboo group. Greg Parkinson photo.

Snowden. The bill of sale, dated April 23, 1974 recited, "Sold to Robert Snowden, one used semi-trailer used as a gorilla cage, complete with generator and air conditioner, plus one Hamadrayas baboon."

At the time Snowden operated roadside attraction called Chico's Monkey Farm. It was on US 17 near the Ogeechee River at Richmond Hill, Georgia, just south of Savannah. He operated the monkey attraction from 1969 to 1980. After the monkey farm closed, the property, including the gorilla cage, was abandoned. In 1996 Jack Hunter, a Charleston, South Carolina circus fan, went looking for the old cage. He located the site of the monkey farm and there, amid thickets of pine trees and heavy undergrowth, he found what was left of old. 97. As far as we know, its remains may still be there.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Your writers want to express appreciation to the many persons who provided information and documents used to write this paper. In the case of your Atlanta author, he has been collecting data on this subject for forty years. And, some of those who helped are now deceased.

We especially thank the following: past and present staff of the Circus World Museum's Robert L. Parkinson Library, notably Fred Dahlinger, Jr. and Erin Foley; the staff of the Ringling Museum of the Circus in Sarasota including Deborah Walk

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Also contributing significantly were: Jim Alexander, Mike Cecere, Roy Edwards, Bill Hall, Gordon Hull, Jack Hunter, Ken Kawata, Robert MacDougall, Lori Perkins, Nigel Rothfels, Mark Rosenthal, Al Stencell, William "Buckles" Woodcock, and Dom-

inic Yodice.

We must also remember those who helped but who have passed away: Rudy Bundy, Tony Conway, Chappie Fox, Charles "Chuck" Meltzer, and Charles W. "Chang" Reynolds.

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Gargantua's cage after coming out of the Circus World Museum paint shop in 1993. Richard Reynolds photo.

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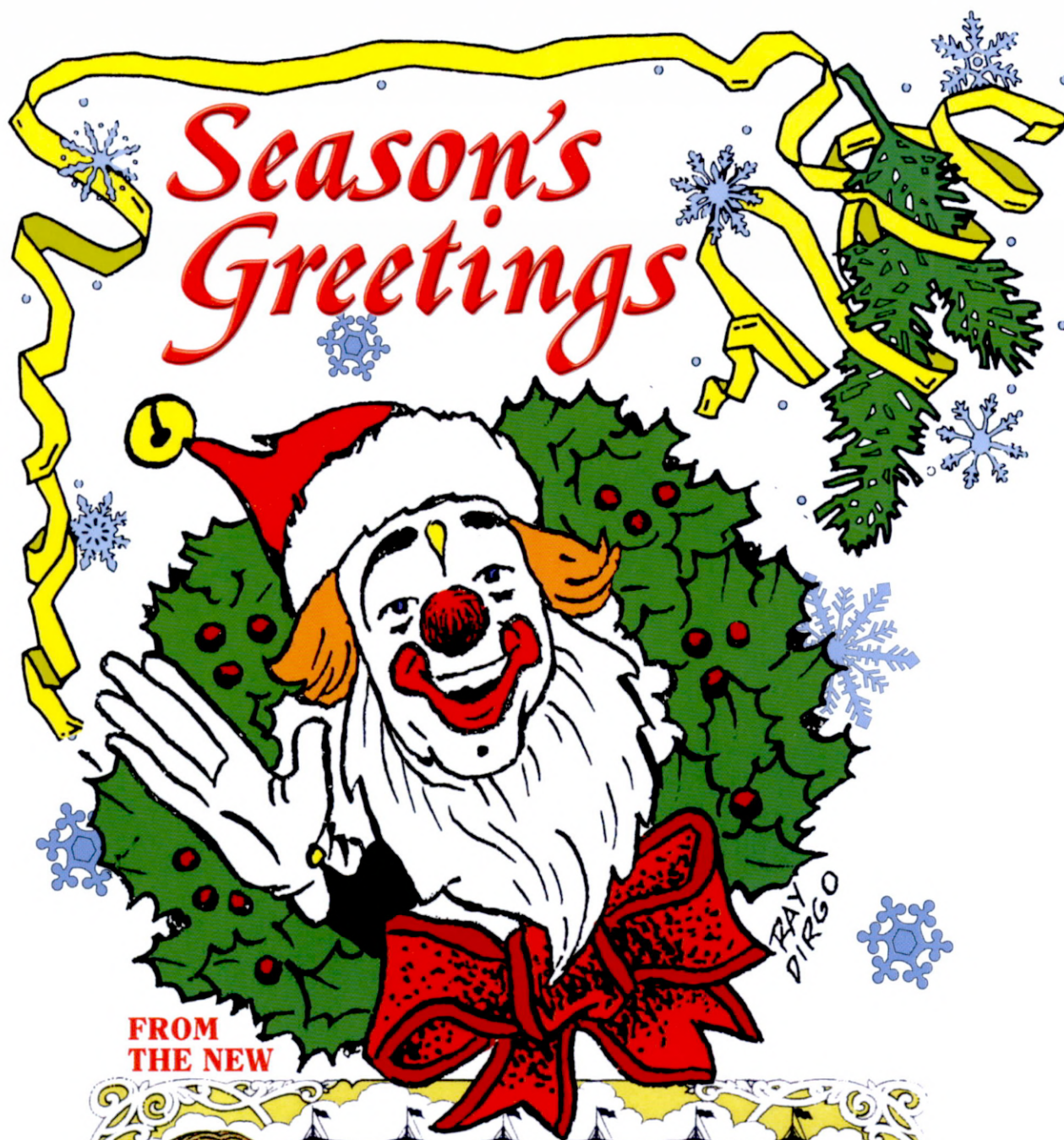


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More about Gorillas And other Great Apes **NOELL'S ARK**

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

Bob and Anna Mae Noell were married in 1931 after knowing each other for only ten days. Bob was nineteen and Mae was seventeen.

He grew up on a farm. Mae came from a vaudeville family. Both loved animals and presented them on a small truck circus. They bought a young 49 pound chimpanzee named Snookie. He was their first wrestler.

From 1940 to 1971 they toured the east coast with the "World's Only Boxing and Wrestling Chimpanzees." Suzy was added to keep Snookie happy. The Noells paid \$300 each for them. They later bought Joe from the Detroit Zoo for \$700. Joe and Suzy presented them with Congo, their first baby chimp.

The Noell's traveling unit was called Gorilla Show. The name was chosen for marketing reasons. Even though the show featured chimpanzees, the word Gorilla was more marketable than Chimpanzee, a lot easier to pronounce, and the general public referred to them as "monkeys."

Over the forty years the wrestling ape show operated, thousands of people paid \$1 to watch the toughest guy in town fight a little eighty pound monkey. Mae said, "The Noell's Ark Gorilla show played fairs and carnivals for twenty-three years. During that time, some 20,000 frisky humans ventured into the ring with the muscular monkeys. Approximately 18,211 have been carried out. No one has ever beaten one of the apes. There was a sign out front that said, 'No show guaranteed to last over five seconds. Maximum five minutes.'"

The wrestling arena was in a specially built semi-trailer. The back of



The entrance to the Chimp Farm in its heyday. All illustrations are from the Bob and Mae Noell photo archives courtesy of Suncoast Primate Sanctuary Foundation, Inc.

the trailer opened into a small stage which faced the midway. The stage was used to "bally" the show. The wrestling arena was eight feet wide, fifteen feet long and seven feet tall, with bars along the fifteen foot sides.

In March 1953 Bob had his first serious encounter with one of the chimps. Joe had gotten him down and bit off two of his fingers. It was not known until Bob handed them to a helper. The fingers healed and Bob carried one of them in a pouch in his pocket for the rest of his life.

The accident caused Mae to

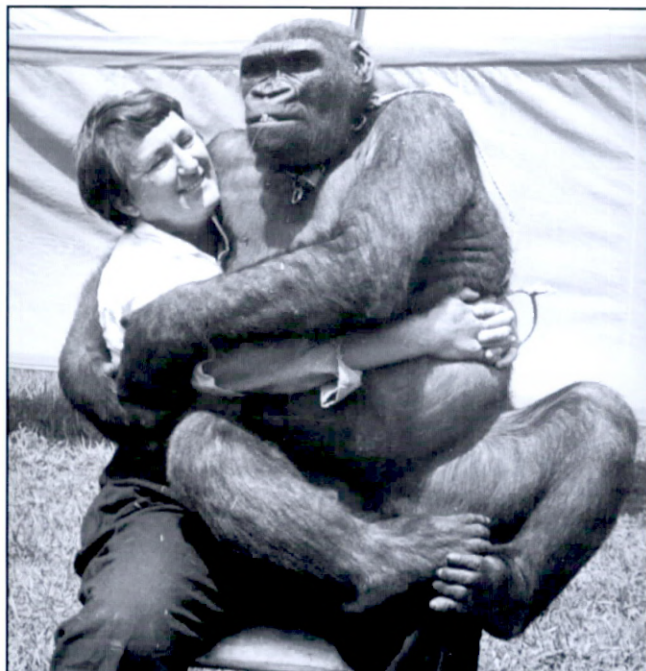
think it was time for them to have a place of their own to spend the winters.

After searching in the Tampa area they found three acres near Tarpon Springs, Florida in February 1954. The property was called

"The Alligator Farm." It was operated by Bessie and Jimmy McVey. Included in the purchase were three alligators in shallow ponds near the front entrance as well as five trained monkeys and a high diving dog.

This became their winter quarters

Mae Noell and her gorilla Tommy in 1963.



and later their Chimp Farm. The Florida location soon became a home for pets that were no longer manageable.

Cages were built for all of them. Mae said property was improved "piece by piece" as they made money to buy and stockpile cement blocks and other equipment. A cement block wall was constructed around the property. Soon after the place became a sanctuary for damaged, aging or unwanted primates.

They left caretakers while on the road from May to September.

By 1978 there were more than twenty chimps in the collection. Forty-five babies had been born there.

Between 1948 and 1985 they acquired fifty-two chimpanzees, three rare orangutans and more than forty monkeys.

In November of 1956 the Ark was showing in Waycross, Georgia and two men in business suits watched the show. After the crowd left they came to Bob and Mae and asked if they would consider taking the show to Cuba. They told them that they could get rich. The animals would be shipped at no cost. After considerable discussion the Noells decided to go to Cuba. It didn't turn out to be profitable. When they returned home and checked their money out they found the eight weeks they spent in Cuba had shrunk their bankroll by twenty-five dollars.

In the fall of 1971 they bought a baby gorilla name Otto. Otto was desperately sick at the time. He was taken on the road with their gorilla show that played with carnivals. That year they also bought Gorgi, another gorilla.

Betsy Swart wrote in her 1993 book *The Great Ape Project* about visiting the Chimp Farm around 1989. "As we paid our \$2.25 and walked into Noell's Ark—the Chimp Farm—we passed a woman with three small children. They were standing in front of a barren concrete cage, staring at



Bob Noell making an opening for his show on a carnival.

the lonely chimp inside.

"In 1939 the Noells attended the (New York) World's Fair. And it was there that Bob first got the idea of using animals in their act. Soon after he bought a gorilla [actually a chimp] from a dealer and traveled around the country with this new member of their family. The gorilla was a crowd-pleaser, especially after Bob latched on the idea of having the gorilla box with humans.

"The Noell's traveling days are over now. But the animals which they acquired during their working years reside in a concrete jungle near Tarpon Springs, Florida. The Chimp Farm is visited by hundreds of tourists each year.

"The entrance to the Chimp Farm has a carnival-like appearance with huge signs announcing 'Real Live' chimps, gorillas and alligators. The same carnival-like attitude is encouraged on the inside as well. Food in the form of monkey chow and nuts is available at the front desk or through bubble-gum dispensers.

"At the entrance to the Farm is a baby chimp in a Plexiglas and plywood box. A sign taped to cage proclaims that this baby is the fifty-eighth baby

chimp born at the Noell's facility.

"Further along the walkway is a barren cage containing a chimp named Kongo. He was born in 1948 and was one of the Noell's original boxing chimps. In fact, he still has the unremovable chain around his neck to prove it.

"Next door there is Johnny. The sign in front of his cage says he was a former 'show chimp' and that someone has taught him to

speak. He very clearly enunciates the syllables 'MaMa' as he extends his hand for a peanut from a passerby.

"Other animals, included Cheetah, who, the Noells claim, once performed with Johnny Weismuller of Tarzan fame."

In 1971 the Noells ended their traveling and settled on their property.

After retiring they cared for abandoned animals, mostly apes and monkeys. Mae said, "We retired our animals with us, we could have sold them easily enough. But we felt

A poster used by the Noell gorilla show.



they had earned their living as well as we had. Burchie and Joe died in winter quarters in 1978 within a few months of each other, Joe was about 46 or 48 years old—Butch was nearing 40. The only ‘athletic ape’ left was Kongo.

“Many of the other animals at the Chimp Farm are, in the most truest sense of the word, ‘orphans.’ Most chimp trainers work only with very young animals because chimp youngsters, like human youngsters, are more tractable.”

Mae had long thought of recording the history of Noell’s Ark. She studied writing under David K. Himber at the Tarpon Springs campus of the St. Petersburg Junior College in preparation for writing a book. *The History of Noell’s Ark Gorilla Show* was self-published in 1979. David Himber edited the text for her. The book was later reissued and autographed copies now fetch as much as \$500 on eBay.

In the late 1980s Mae decided to form the Chimp Farm, Inc. It was incorporated as a not for profit corporation. Bob Noell died in 1991 and Mae was concerned the about the future financial stability of the Chimp Farm. She provided for a \$250,000 trust in her will.

Mae Noell and Tommy.



In 2000 Mae Noell, at age 84, complained that the Chimp Farm was under attack by “evil people” and “dogooder” animal activists who wanted to take her chimps away and shut her down. “I think the whole damn thing is a conspiracy. They’re trying to make criminals out of us.”

She added, “in 1993 they almost got me. The Federal Government told me that I had to get the zoo up to ‘specifications.’ You wouldn’t believe all the nitpicking!. And here we were, just two women keeping the thing together.”

Mae Noell died on October 15, 2000.

During Mae Noell’s final years she was assisted in the management of the Chimp Farm by her granddaughter Deborah Fletcher Cobb.

In the early 2000s Cobb enlisted a group of interested volunteers to incorporate the Suncoast Primate Sanctuary Foundation, Inc. as a not-for-profit organization to operate the old Chimp Farm. Deborah Cobb was named as a director and registered agent.

The new entity’s purpose was to remove the old cages and generally clean up the property, as well as to secure approval of government licenses that had been revoked.

A fund raising campaign brought money to construct nearly all of its planned 19,000-square foot facility. The improvements cost about \$225,000, not



Bob Noell and the fully grown Tommy.

including donated labor from local contracting firms. All of the 45 primates then lived in spacious enclosures.

The facility could not keep up with changing government regulations that required larger cages for exotic animals. The U. S. Department of Agriculture revoked the license of the decades-old roadside attraction in 1999 and forced it to close its doors to the public because of its rusty, small and dirty cages and poor record keeping.

In a 2004 issue of the *Monkey Wire Monthly* Carrie McLaren told of her

Mae with a baby gorilla.





Mae Noell and a newly born chimp.

visit to the Chimp Farm, "Like many Florida towns, Palm Harbor, with its perennial sunny skies and gulf coast seabreeze, is a popular place to retire—and not just for humans. For the past fifty years, Palm Harbor has also been a resting place for the apes, monkeys and other animals at the Suncoast Primate Sanctuary.

"Many of the sanctuary's occupants are retirees from Hollywood. But that doesn't mean they're seniors: chimps retire at an age when most of us are working out first fast food jobs. After reaching adolescence, apes often refuse to do what humans want. Since the vast majority of chimps seen in the media are young pups, many people believe chimps to be small creatures, easily confused with monkeys.

"Otto, the sanctuary's sole gorilla, starred in the old Amerian Tourister commercials. Like the other chimps, Otto watches a lot of TV.

"Everyone who works at Chimp Farm these days is a volunteer, even Debbie, the Noells' granddaughter, who runs the place. Debbie is a fervently religious woman and all the music played inside the Chimp Farm headquarters is contemporary Christian."

The St. Petersburg Times of October 11, 2004 reported, "There is a cold, hard cage a few feet south of the main entrance of the Suncoast Primate Sanctuary.

"The abandoned cage serves as a

reminder of the facility's shameful past as a decrepit roadside zoo and as a silent thank you to donors who made the pen obsolete.

"A five-year fund raising campaign has helped the nonprofit sanctuary construct nearly all of its planned 19,000-square foot facility at 4600 Alt. U.S. 19. One section is yet to be completed, but all of the sanctuary's primates now live in spacious enclosures filled with barrels, tires and toys.

"In 1999, the sanctuary, known for years as Noell's Ark Chimp Farm, was closed to the public because its inhabitants were kept in small rusty cages that did not meet U. S. Department of Agriculture standards.

"In 2001, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission denied the renewal of the sanctuary's state license for owning exotic animals because of similar problems.

"After appealing the denial of its state license, the sanctuary was granted permission to keep its animals on a probationary basis, said Capt. Linda Harrison of the state fish and wildlife commission. The commission inspected the construction of the new facility in 2003 and granted the sanctuary a full license that runs through September 2005.

"The sanctuary's main facility has outdoor chain-link enclosures of 300 and 500 square feet, which houses some of the larger occupants: chimpanzees and orangutans.

"The sanctuary also houses a baboon, black-handed spider monkeys, capuchin monkeys, a lesser spotted guenon, rhesus macaques, a squirrel monkey and a vervet mon-



Bob and Mae Noell with Tommy.

key. The largest primate is Otto, a 550 pound silverback gorilla."

On June 7, 2006 after a hearing sustained the earlier determination of the inspection, the license to exhibit animals under the Animal Welfare Act was again denied.

As of September 18, 2006 the old Chimp Farm remains closed to the public.

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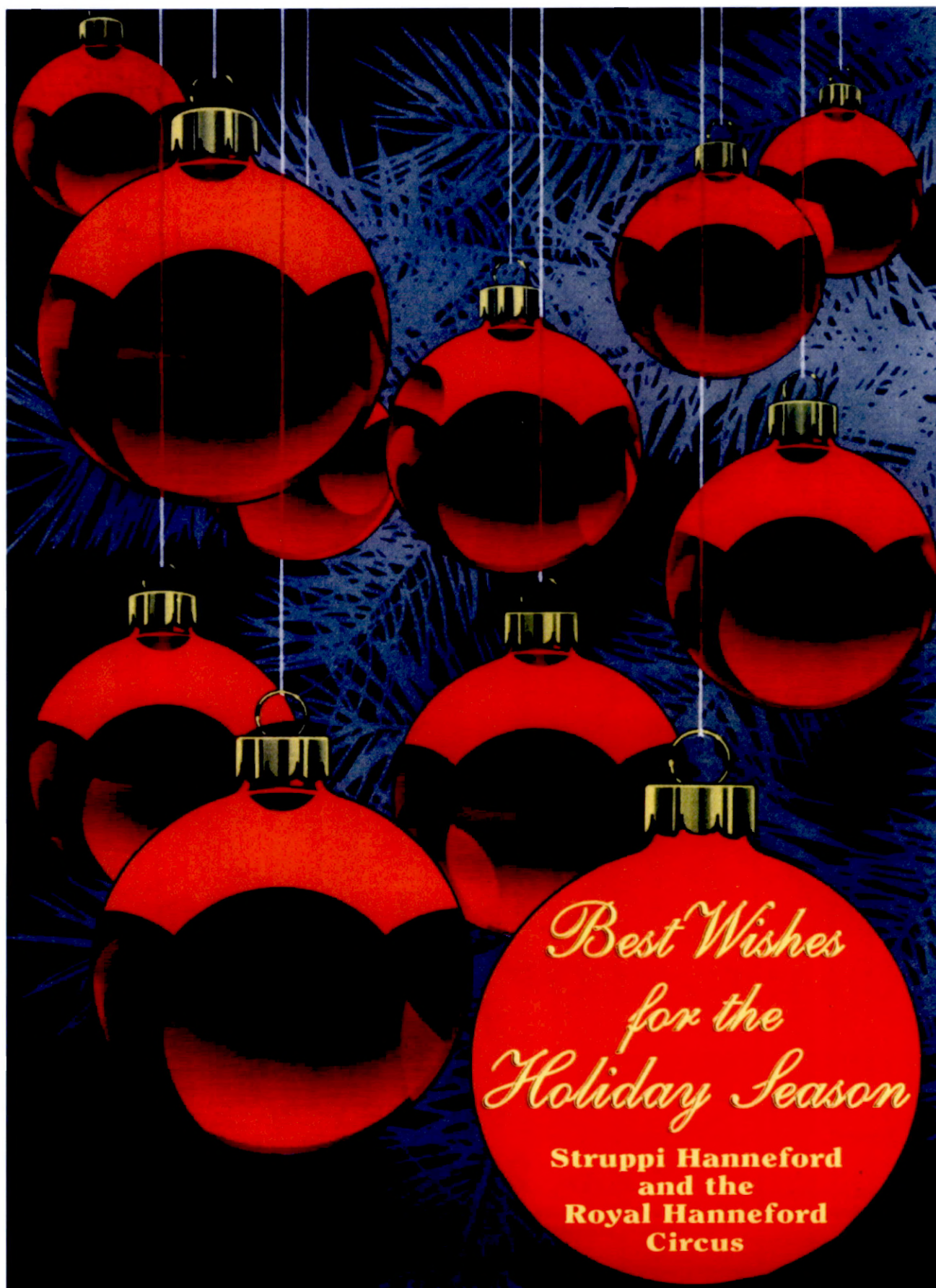
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Ringling's Disastrous European Tour

THE 1963-64 TOUR RECALLED BY DON STACEY

*Reprinted from King Pole
September 2006, No. 160 www.circusfriends.co.uk.*

Only months after leaving Bertram Mills Circus to join Holiday on Ice at its London offices, I found I was pitch forked straight back into the world of circus, as Publicity Manager for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Greatest Show on Earth for its 1963-1964 tour of Europe.

Morris Chalfen, owner of the giant ice spectacles of Holiday on Ice in America and worldwide, had forged an agreement with John Ringling North and Arthur M. Concello to promote the European tour. Although he had a great love for circus, and knew John Ringling North well (Chalfen also being mooted at one time as a possible buyer of The Greatest Show on Earth), his involvement was

A show publicity photo.



The elephants arriving at the Ahoy, Rotterdam, in January 1964. All illustrations are from the author's collection unless otherwise credited.

created by necessity in order to safeguard his company's pre-eminence in the arenas and auditoriums of

Europe. Ringling's advent in Europe was at the dawn of a new era of arena entertainments in America, horse shows, Disney on Parade and other big new spectacular shows,

Galla Shawn with one of the Rhodin chimps.





Art Concello, John North, Morris Chalfen and Henry North toasting the opening of the show in Lille, France.

which could be presented, in arenas in similar style to the ice shows which had dominated the market to this time.

Ringling being the biggest circus in the world, and with great prestige in America, could possibly have toppled Holiday's status in Europe. It was deemed better to be involved in its promotion in some way rather than to be excluded. Chalfen, a great showman, also had his eyes fixed firmly on making money! He wanted a piece of the action as they might say in the states.

Thus, the involvement of Holiday on Ice concerned not only the public-

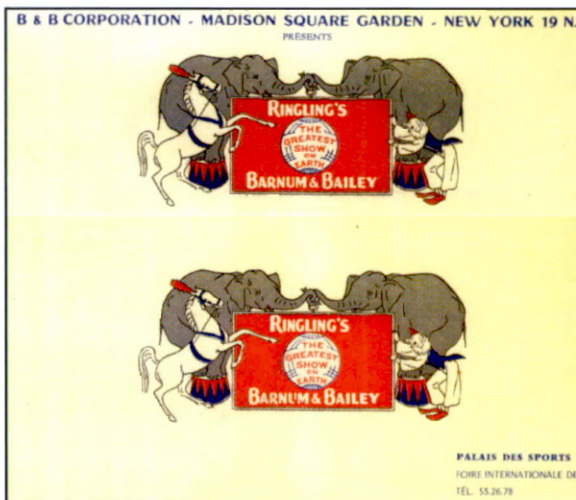
The arena in Rotterdam showing the wild animal cage.



ity and marketing of the show but its routing throughout Europe, deals with the building managements, and assisting in the building of the new unit which would run at the same time as the American unit. Relatively little has been recorded of this tour, apart from in the two biographies on John Ringling North, David Lewis Hammarstrom's *Big Top Boss* (1992) and Ernest Albrecht's *A Ringling By Any Other Name* (1989), and both of those contain inaccuracies. It is, perhaps, with an insider's memory that I can throw more light upon the tour which proved to be nothing short of a fiasco.

Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth had triumphed on its extensive tours of Europe at the turn of the century, playing for long periods at Olympia, London, but on mere one day stands in the British provinces and elsewhere. Its place in European circus history is assured but that of Ringling, Barnum and Bailey is not. Apparently John Ringling North, President of the Ringling show, had been talking of his ambition to best James Bailey's triumphant tour of Europe

for some years, and indeed this became public knowledge in June, 1959. He promised a European unit possibly by autumn, 1960, and Arthur M. Concello, then executive director of the Ringling show, scouted around in Europe for suitable buildings to play in, the show having given up its big top back in 1956 in favor of arena presentations. Ernest Albrecht has suggested that from the beginning it was always understood that the European unit would be called Barnum and Bailey, the rationale being that this was the name under which Bailey had conquered Europe nearly sixty years before. It was to be assumed that the title still meant something, but how often in circus history have we heard



Letterheads used by the European show. Circus World Museum collection.

of a title being completely forgotten within a generation or two? I do not go along with Albrecht's assertion as to the title, which was originally advertised by me as Ringling's Barnum and Bailey Circus.

North, the ageing playboy and main shareholder in the show paid little attention to the detail of arrangements for the tour, and it is far more likely that Concello took upon himself to stress the Barnum & Bailey part of the title against that of Ringling Brothers. When North turned up for the grand opening of the tour, a tryout in Lille, France, he was almost apoplectic with rage to find this title and ordered me to change every scrap of advertising



A show publicity photo.



Performers in spec wardrobe.

material, the posters, newspaper advertisements, programs, press releases and photo-captions, and so on, with immediate effect, reverting to the American title, Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus. Rudy Bundy, who North later brought in to try to salvage the tour, maintained the title change was Concello's blunder and they had to change the name back to the American one, "Because we wouldn't have been able to declare a tax loss on anything, because you have to take it off the right name of the company."

As I have said, John Ringling North played only a small part in the show's preparations, the brunt of the work being left to Concello and his henchmen. One of the Ringling executives from America, Lloyd Morgan, was appointed manager and he came to Europe some months ahead of the opening to prepare things. A fat, jovial man with a penchant for good food and big cigars, he made the most of his expenses-free time in Lille, where the show's equipment was built and gathered together. Arthur L. Bailey (Bill Bailey as he was known), one of Holiday's English executives, and a self-taught multilingualist who could turn his hand to almost anything, was drafted from Holiday on Ice, and since Morgan could speak no foreign languages, it was Bailey who actually supervised the construction of the show, its wag-



The program cover used at all of the cities played. The same program cover was used on the U.S. show in 1963. Jackie LaClaire collection.

ons, aerial rigging system, lighting, ring fences etc. The production numbers were rehashed from a previous American show created by Max Weldy in Sarasota, Florida and were decidedly poor quality and lackluster.

On the publicity side, I was given only the scantiest of support and help from Ringling's American offices, a few inferior photos, a handful of color transparencies, a few very "hack" press stories, and an incomplete list of acts which would be featured in this grandiose new edi-

tion of The Greatest Show on Earth. I was given to believe that the cast would include the great clown Lou Jacobs, synonymous with the Ringling show, and some acts which never materialized, such as the Yong Brothers' equilibristic act, the Abbott Sisters, acrobatic number, and Bob Top's aerial roller skating thrill number, all of which were duly programmed for the opening in Lille. I was told to use a poster of Lou Jacobs for the tour, and for the program cover design was sent the previous year's design, that of a show girl on a horse, one of the least eye-catching of all Ringling's cover artwork.

It was lucky for North that in me he had somebody who could improvise, and who knew a bit about circus, so that Holiday's involvement was of a professional kind. Likewise, Bailey ensured the equipment was first-class and that the tour arrangements were made efficiently, he being given the ludicrous title of Secretary-Treasurer to begin with, even though he had nothing to do with the ongoing financial or secretarial side of the show. North was, as usual, listed as President and Producer, even though he had virtually nothing to do with the staging, while Richard Barstow received the credit for Staging and Directing. This he had done for the original 1962 production, but in Europe it was restaged by choreographer Margaret Smith (Concello's

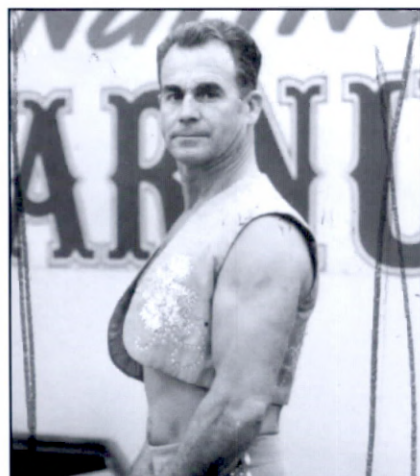


A publicity photo taken in Venice, Florida before the trip to Europe.

long-term girlfriend and later wife) and performance director Bob Dover who came over for a few days, as did music director Merle Evans. The promised Ringmaster Harold Ronk, never materialized but Wayne Larey, a former flying trapeze artist in Concello's troupe, was later drafted in as a rather ineffectual Performance Director.

Umberto Schlitzholz Bedini was the booking agent responsible for the acts. He'd been a close friend and associate of North's for many years, taking in all the European shows to find suitable new talent for America. One can only assume that Concello dictated to Bedini what European acts were to be booked for the European tour; they appeared to be

Harold Alzana in the backyard.



some of the cheapest and worst that could be found, and every one of them had already been seen throughout Europe in circuses great or small. There appeared to be little or no reasoning given to programming, since why on earth would one have gathered a three ring display featuring the Dior Sisters on the rolling globes in center ring flanked by the Goldinis' equilibristic act, and the very inferior equilibrist, act of Rutha Dschapur, Bedini's lady friend?

The nucleus of the show comprised some of the top attraction which had been with Ringling for years in America, Unus, Gerald Soules, Roberto Vasconcellos, Galla Shawn, Harold Alzana, the Stephenson dogs, and a few liberty horses shown by Czeslaw Mroczkowski and his wife Gena. Most of the other turns were recruited in Europe and offered nothing new to European audiences.

The clowns were a distinctly odd and old bunch! They came from America, although a few were of European origin. Without Lou Jacobs, they were headed by the producing clown Paul Jung, an elderly, gentle character with a completely stiff leg who created one or two very tired group clown gags like the soldier entree, badly. Jung, who did not last the short tour but returned to the American unit, was later the victim of a savage murder in New York. Otto Griebeling, whose fame as a hobo clown was eclipsed in America only by that of Emmett Kelly, proved disappointing and ineffectual, although personally I found him a delightful, friendly soul with not one ounce of grandeur that the status in America may have granted him. He was already suffering from cancer of the throat, but he was a mime clown, who was partnered by British-born Freddie Freeman in what I heard

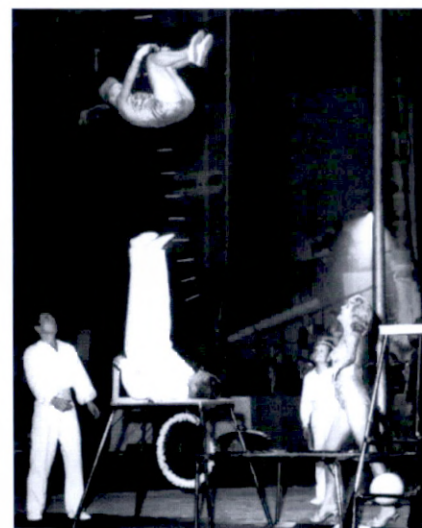
was their famous comedy boxing act. It was nothing short of pathetic. Kinko turned out to be an octogenarian, myopic contortionist clown with a tiny car prop and Billy Ward was a former flyer and another friend of Concello's. The Spaniard Eduardini had an exceptionally untalented bunch of dwarves. Mark Anthony, another American tramp clown, did not turn up in Europe, but we did have the Droguettes, an elderly couple specializing in comedy hat throwing. In my opinion, the only clown Ringling brought to Europe with any talent at all--and he had it in plenty--was Jackie LeClaire, far younger than the others and with lots of novel items honed in the three-ring environment. Jackie was,



The elephant herd in Rotterdam.

and remains today, a delightful fellow, and forty three years later, he's not retired. LeClaire was everything the others might have been in the past, talented, but he was young, keen and talented. The others were simply clapped out, and when

The Fredonias, risley act.



Irvin Feld bought the Ringling show a few years later he had to create a clown college to bring new talent into the business.

But, before the show's opening, I had little inkling just how poor The Greatest Show on Earth was to prove in Europe. I had never been to the states and therefore never seen a Ringling show but by 1963 John Ringling North had virtually run the big show into the ground. By the time of my first visit to America in 1971, its new owners, headed by Irvin Feld, had created a stunning reinvigoration of the company, and it truly was The Greatest Show on Earth. In Europe, we at Holiday on Ice lived to be embarrassed by our connection with its tour.

Prior to arriving in Europe, some of the featured artists were presented under the title of an American Circus on its first visit to Russia. Although a number of the attractions were certainly not American, it did well there. Acts included the Tennessees' Western number; Roberto de Vasconcellos, high school rider; Phillipino slack wire juggler Caesar; Canadian trapeze artist Gerard Soules; Galla Shawn, trapeze Washington; Ilona Fredonia, solo trapeze; the Fredonias' Risley act; Bob Top's high roller skating number; tramp cycling clown Joe Jackson Jr; Bob Hammond's birds; British high wire

performer Harold Alzana; the Flying Palacios; the Fenis Ferronis, roller balancers; Wells and the 4 Fays, acrobats; Karl Kossmayer's unrideable mules. The Tennessees, Hammond, Kossmayer, Bob Top, Jackson, Wells and the Fays were among acts not contracted for the European Ringling tour but were taken to Russia by the promoters Morris Chalfen and Art Concello.

As early as December, 1962, Digger Pugh, who was contracted to provide 20 aerial ballet girls and dancers, had announced that the Ringling show would be opening in Antwerp the following year for a tour lasting 12 months, to include Belgium, Holland, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Britain. He said that the show would play in the Hague or Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, Geneva, Paris and probably at Wembley, England.

The Hanneford's riding act was among the numbers he revealed had been booked to come to Europe. Some of this information proved misleading, and in fact the show opened in Lille, France, on September 18, 1963 and played only in Paris, Brussels, Ghent, Hamburg, Kiel, Dortmund, Copenhagen and Rotterdam thereafter. Sadly, I have not kept records of the dates of these cities but it would appear the show closed abruptly at the Ahoy building in Rotterdam, Holland, after a scant six months. I have advertisements for

that engagement, but one dates the city as being played from January 26 to February 5, 1964, and the other from January 26 to February 19.

I arrived in Lille before the show opened, and entering the hotel which served as both company offices and accommodation for staff and artists, I came straight upon members of the Palacios Mexican family who I knew. Puzzled by their restrained welcome, I quickly learned something (which nobody had thought important enough to inform the publicity manager in advance) that their brother Lalo Palacios had died from an over dose of barbiturates in the hotel after arriving there from Russia. The two groups of Palacios, the Robertos and Palacios, had to regroup in order to open with their acts at the premiere. One-finger balancer Unus, a stellar attraction for Ringling in America for years, was unable to appear due to a cut hand, and Roberto de Vasconcellos was missing from the opening due to Russian red tape holding up his horses at customs. Ilona Fredonia had a fall from her trapeze, fracturing an arm, and so was sidelined, and costumes vital to the production were also delayed en route from Russia.

The Palais des Sports was certainly not the best of places in which to see a three-ring circus premiere, but in fact we regarded the Lille engage-

A spec float in the back yard.



A spec float in the back yard.



ment as a tryout place, the big opening night coming in Paris. The *World's Fair* newspaper, however, chose to send a critic to the Lille opening, and he proceeded to "slate" the entire show! This was partly justified, given the problems incurred at the opening, but did the paper have to send Bob Aylwin, who had long been press and publicity director for Bertram Mills Circus, who had a vested interest in Ringling not going to London, and who was an old crony of Circus Editor, Edward Graves? He saved his only praise for the Fredonias and Stephenson family acts, which he had known from his Mills days, and for the British high wire act of Alzana. But much of Aylwin's criticism was totally justified. He said at the time, "I don't give a hoot how good they are or were in America. I went to Lille to see it and naturally expected a show worthy of their name. They told me it had been difficult to get acts. Of course it had been at a time when the tenting shows were still on the road, but surely the management should have known that and accordingly put back the opening until spring 1964 or until such time as a quality program could have been put together. The opening at Lille was a sad mistake--it completely misfired."

The Ringling tour management team were joined in Lille by Holiday's management team, and by John Ringling North, who no doubt expected to see a production worthy of his esteemed name. The show dismayed everyone. In an attempt to salvage things, North took--for him--decisive action, sending Concello back to the states but leaving it to somebody else to tell him he'd been fired. With him went Margaret Smith. Digger Pugh went too, and Shirley Coombes was brought in to act as dance director. Rudy Bundy, an old friend of North's, came in as Treasurer but to observers like myself he seemed totally ineffectual in so important a role.

Lloyd Morgan continued as Manager, Skee Goodhart and myself from Holiday on Ice as Tour Coordinator and Publicity Manager, respectively. Changes were made to the program, almost on a daily basis, and although I published a

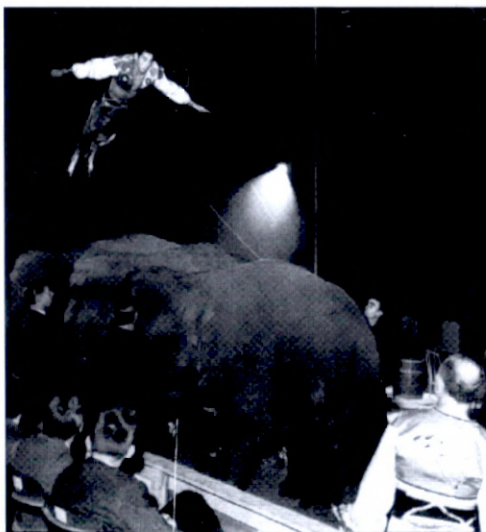


John North and manager Lloyd Morgan.

new edition of the printed program for each city, I was always a few steps behind events, with printed inserts issued to try to give the most up to the minute listing of attractions. To this day, nobody has tried to analyze the vast number of acts, good and bad, who came and went in the space of six months, but I will attempt it here, using notes I made at the time.

From the outset in Lille there had been backstage tensions. Maggie Smith, her relationship with executive director Concello growing, had already been given the authority to stage the aerial ballets and production numbers, which had been resurrected from the previous American show, and although Richard Barstow was given the program credit for staging, direction and choreography, he was effectively sidelined from

The leaps over elephants by the Arabs.



the European show. By the time he was finally brought in, Barstow was quoted as saying, "They had some dumpy little girls Maggie Smith had got from England. The acts were not very good. It was a horrible circus, you can take it from me." After seeing the show in Lille, he stormed up to North and shouted, "Take my name off this thing! I am going back America! I don't want any part of this!" North, however, persuaded him to stay and try to help out the mess the show had become. North's loyal younger brother, Henry Ringling North, was at the Lille opening and even he admitted of the show: "It was an absolute disgrace, and my brother was beside himself. But he managed to, in a few days, book three or four strong acts to get in so we weren't embarrassed when we put the show on in Paris." But Bedini, North's long time friend and booking agent, was banished; he never worked for Ringling again.

To provide the backbone of the show, the elephant herd, Digger Pugh had arranged for Ringling to buy elephants in Europe, since the show was continuing in America with its own large herd. Eight mature Asiatic elephants were brought from Chipperfield in England, and Hugo Schmidt came over from America to put them into two groups for the outer rings, while Sir Robert Fossett's herd of five Asiatic elephants was hired to fill the center ring, shown by the urbane Ivor Rosaire. The elephants, working with show girls, appeared in a very inferior production number "Elephants and Feathers," the trainers becoming virtually anonymous in production outfits. Many months after the show had closed, I called Mary Fossett to enquire why she had not banked the sizeable check sent in the final accounting of the elephant engagement. She admitted she had lost it. I suggested a replacement check could be sent. "Oh, don't worry Don, I am sure it turn up eventually" was her casual response.

Apart from the fiasco that was evolving with the Ringling show in Europe, North was also undoubtedly miffed with Concello over his association with Morris Chalfen and the visit of some of the acts to

Russia from July 4, 1963, a cut of the action of which North was, one assumes, excluded. Art Concello was a recognized "wheeler-dealer" who always made the best deal for himself and also became involved with Chalfen in a second visit to Russia, 1967, by an American circus company. Chalfen had first taken his Holiday on Ice show to Russia in 1959 as part of the culture exchange deal. It had long been his ambition to take a Moscow Circus to America, and apparently he won the opportunity because of a favor he had given the Russians in May 1961. He was in Paris with Holiday on Ice at that time when he was informed that the Soviets wanted to book a dance company into the Moscow arena he had already contracted for his show, at the same time. A meeting with the Soviet Minister of Culture, the charming Yeheterina Furtseva, at the Soviet Embassy in Paris, persuaded him that he should agree to this, and in exchange she agreed to arrange for the Moscow State Circus to be allowed to go to America under his management.

The Ringling production numbers brought to Europe from the American 1962 production were inferior, to say the least, to some of North's earlier efforts. "Elephants and Feathers" was a fairly standard display of three rings of elephants, 13 in total, accompanied by a number of male and female dancers, the latter wielding huge yellow and orange feathered fans. The aerial ballet was called "Top Hats, White Ties and Tails," and featured the "rapturous queen of the air" Galla Shawn, a plump, tough and very likeable American trapeze Washington exponent, whose outer ring aerial co-stars were the Frenchmen, Lothar, nearing the end of his career, and Silky, a newcomer of much younger years, who ultimately became famous under the name of Gerard Edon, and who keeps in touch with me to this day. The other spectacle was "Around the World in Eight Minutes," with animals, floats and performers in profusion but rather tame when one recalls the production highlights of that finest of all circus films, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, of 1952. One can only assume that it was eas-

ier to resuscitate the productions from 1962 than recreate some of Ringling's finer moments from past years.

Incongruity has often been the case with Ringling and some of the acts placed together in the three ring displays proved this. The Rogge Sisters' rolling globes act (comprising Vera Rogge, Frank Foster's sister Juliette, and 19 year old Valerie from Blackpool), was flanked by Caesar's mediocre slack wire juggling act, and the Goldini Sisters, (Wiebke and Isolde Chaludi, originally from Germany) with an equilibristic act. A Moroccan tumbling group from the Ringling show in America, who we named The Sons of the Desert, was as mediocre as the Eduardini acrobatic dwarves, flanking the classy Risley act of the Fredonias, one of whom is still today an executive with the Ringling shows. Wolfgang Bartschelly, who had featured with Ringling in America but before that with Billy Smart here, with his plate spinning act, was flanked by two numbers, the Chaludis' cycling trio, and Karl Caprice, unicycling juggler. Young juggler Eddy Eduardo, son of the dwarf troupe man Eduardini, worked with equilibrist Rutha Dschapur (both acts of appalling mediocrity for such a large show) flanking the very poor chimpanzee act of Jack Rhodin from Sweden.

The two flying trapeze acts contributed by the Palacios family worked simultaneously but without Lalo, undoubtedly the finest flying trapeze performer of his time, they lacked impetus. Readers might by

Ivor Rosaire, Juliet Rosaire and Otto Griebling.



now have noted how few three-ring displays of acts had been gathered for Lille. Solo appearances included the Valadors, the Arab troupe leaping over the backs of elephants; the six quite ordinary liberty horses brought from America by the Mroczkowskis, billed as Charles and Gena Moroski in keeping with the simplification of their names introduced in America; Stephenson's dogs; solo heel-catch sensational trapeze performer Gerard Soules; the roller balancing artistry of Duo Fenis Ferrom; the one-finger stand artistry of Unus (Franz Furtner from Austria, a long time Ringling headliner in the states); and Harold Alzana, a sensation on the high wire. There was a further three ring display, probably the most effective, with three tight wire acts, Henry Domis and Armando Elleano (brother of Olga Smart) flanking the Spaniard Manuel Dos Santos, husband of Galla Shawn, all of whom attempted or performed somersaults on the wire. There was no wild animal act booked, but a brown bear act, Krefts, which came to Lille from Big Bob Fossett's Big Top Circus in Skegness that summer. With the necessity of the bears being walked a long way down the hippodrome track to the center ring, there were big problems with this number at the opening; the result was it was released from its contract the following day. When his horses arrived in Lille, the haute école rider the Portuguese Roberto de Vasconcellos, Visconde Ponte de Barea, added his number. He was featured at Olympia, London with Mills in the 1930s; by now he was old and ugly and his high school work was frankly unimpressive!

John Ringling North took some interest in the show at last after the fiasco of the Lille opening and a full house greeted the opening night in Paris. The opening display consisted of the Rogge Sisters rolling globes act and that of the Dior Sisters, flanking the knock about act of the Silvanos (Biasinis). Added were the unridable mules of Karl Kossmayer, and for one night only the duo Binder-Binder's springboard act. Merle Evans returned, as he had to Lille, for one night only to direct the very American brass band style of orches-

tra, no longer liked in Europe, which for the rest of the tour was fronted by a well-known European circus musical director, V. O. Ursmar. The best that can be said of the music was that it was traditional old-style American but far behind the emerging patterns of that accepted for European circus bands!

According to my records we also added in Paris the solo trapeze acts of Ilona Fredonia, a pretty young girl, and of Josy Lane, who appeared with Billy Smart's Circus in England one year; equilibrist Ferreri who replaced the Goldinis in the display with Unus and Rutha Dschapur; Dutch foot juggler Mariska, who joined Eddie Eduardo, Bartschelly, Caesar and the Castors' Risley act in a massed display; two Portuguese clowns so abysmal I forgot to take their names; the haute ecole act of Ingeborg Rhodin from Sweden; and the Silvanos' knock about act was replaced by the very young German globe walkers the Al Bohndos. Alenzimra's camel and pony act was stretched into two groups.

At the opening night, various executives were detailed to entertain different groups of press men from the countries we expected to play with the show. My group turned out to be the press representatives from Copenhagen, and I valiantly tried to impress them with a sumptuous dinner and lots of wine! But one man kindly turned to me and said, "Mr. Stacey, please don't waste your company's money further. It will make no difference. In Copenhagen we will pan the show. How could Ringling possibly bring such a pitiful horse display to Copenhagen, where we have the world's leading horse trainers, the Schumanns?"

He was perfectly right, of course, but it did not increase my hopes for the rest of the show's tour. I can also remember vividly the display in which Unus was always

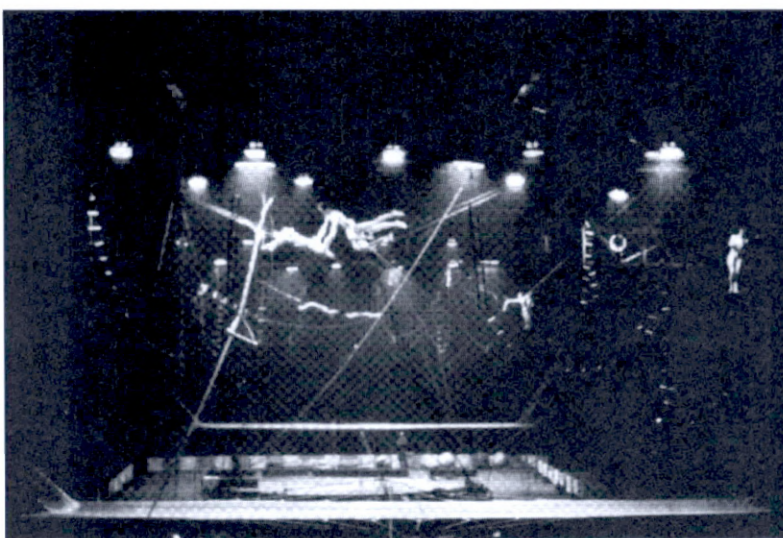


The Rhodins and their chimps.

allowed to close in solo work, but on the Parisian opening night, Ferreri went on far longer, and ringmaster Wayne Larey had to rush down the hippodrome track, blowing his whistle to force the act out of the end ring! During the Paris run, Galla Shawn had a fall from the trapeze, but luckily men were standing by with a hand-held net; I missed seeing this accident as I and some of the acts appearing in the first half had rushed over to catch part of the Cirque d'Hiver-Bouglione program that night.

After that, acts came and went like nine-pins. In Ghent, Viola Mundeling joined with her haute ecole riding, and for that city only the Berosini family appeared with their foot jug-

The Palacios flying trapeze act.



gling act, Ottocardo's balancing ladder act and Jean Berousek's chimps and gorillas. Moroski and his wife Gena left in Ghent and in Hamburg they were replaced by Strassburger's horses and a riding tiger number booked by Reich, leaving after that engagement along with Dschapur, Alzana and Henry Dorms. The Chaludis and Goldinis numbers vanished overnight at some venue and after a fall, in which he managed to catch onto his trapeze bar, Gerard Soules left in Brussels along with Caesar, returning to the United States.

During the Paris engagement Soules had visited London to make an appearance in a Billy Smart recording. Also during the Paris run, the Diors Sisters were forced to change their name to the Dors Sisters, owing to an objection being raised by the fashion house of Christian Dior, despite the act having used that name for some years.

For the Copenhagen run, Hungarian acts the Bertoks, Picards and Tokaj were featured, along with Cirkus Benneweis horses shown by Diana Benneweis, Wenzel and Douglas Kossmayer.

In Hamburg, Kiel and Dortmund the acts were augmented by Asage Kragh's sea lions, Jackie Althoff's bears, and the Benneweis wild animal group presented by Franz Trubka, wire walker Munoz replacing Domis along the way, and Hungarian juggler Fudi also joining, along with the Belgian clowns

Moracs. Lillian Kenny also appeared at some stage with her fine solo trapeze act, and Manfred Doval from the Ringling show replaced the outstanding British high wire star, Harold Alzana. Trubka's cage act consisted of only one tiger, two lions, two polar bears and two Himalayan bears.

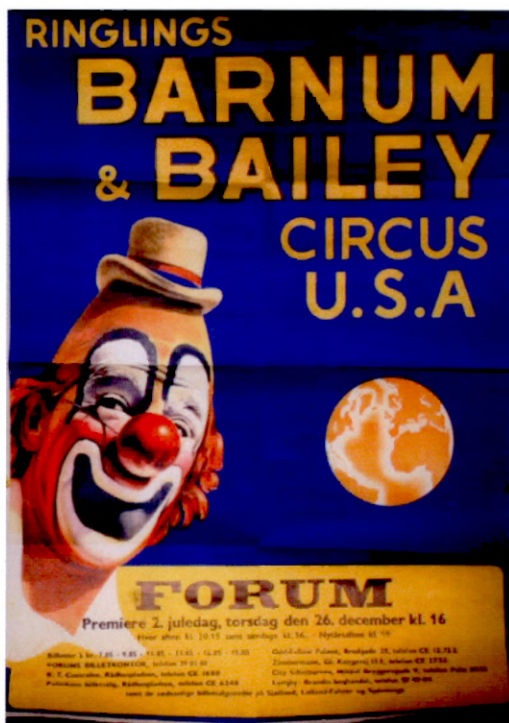
With Jack Rhodin's chimps there from the outset, and

later Ingeborg Rhodin's high school riding later came Trolle Rhodin's liberty horses and this was Trolle's first introduction to the Greatest Show on Earth. He later took on the eight elephants Ringling acquired from Chipperfield, taking them on tour with his Cirkus Brazil Jack in Eastern Block countries. (The elephants later went to Circus Williams and Gunther Gebel-Williams took them to America with the start of the Ringling Red Unit in 1969.) From this the multi-lingual and well-connected impresario became a confidant of John Ringling North and subsequently enjoyed years of service in America as the Ringling-Barnum international talent scout.

If you, the reader, are confused by the comings and goings of acts on this very short European tour, please try to imagine how confused I was too! I never caught up with the changes, and each change of language program for the handful of cities played had to be accompanied by a printed correction insert, and even that was invariably wrong.

People came and went city by city and several of the original cast went back to America, disillusioned with the European prospects. Freddie Freeman left after Copenhagen, returning to America where Ringling was running not only its regular three ring arena show, but a one ring show at the New York World's Fair, staged by Art Concello, the one show he created for Johnnie North after being sacked in Lille. In all it has to be admitted that the 1963-1964 tour of Europe, such as it was, constituted an unmitigated disaster from beginning to end, both in the artistic and the business concepts.

When the tour closed, there was little to salvage here as those acts remaining from Ringling sources returned to America. The elephants went with Trolle Rhodin's show, and the equipment, built for arena tours and transported by containers in ice-show style, was stored at Franz Althoff's winter quarters in Germany, and 42 years on, if my memory serves me right, was eventually used for the launch of the containerized Circus Williams in that



A poster used by Ringling's Barnum & Bailey Circus in Europe. Pfening Archives.

country.

It has been suggested that Morris Chalfen and Art Concello had made "special deals" by using the Ringling acts as a basis for the American Circus that Chalfen took to Russia prior to the Ringling tour in Europe. It must have helped Chalfen to make this arrangement since it aided his later tours of the Moscow Circus in America and of Holiday on Ice in Russia, but John Ringling North must surely have known of the arrangement whereby his long-standing attractions, the Palacios, Soules, Vasconcellos, Stephensons and others, were sent to Russia, unless he was much more out of touch than is assumed.

Chalfen was a straight-dealing businessman and I do not believe he had any extra special arrangements with Concello. Indeed he must have lost heavily on the aborted European Ringling tour which he promoted in good faith American circus king, although I never heard him utter one word of reproach about the fiasco the tour turned out to be, the product being so greatly inferior to what could be seen in Europe at the time.

David Lewis Hammarstrom in his

book *Big Top Boss* asserted that "after courting respectable patronage in Paris, Ghent, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Kiel, Brussels, Rotterdam, Dortmund, Stuttgart, John decided to call it quits, aborting the stops at Zurich, Frankfurt and London. He took an estimated \$175,000 loss." As I recall it, there was no "respectable" receipts in any of the cities visited, and I know that London was never finalized. North commented in *Amusement Business* that it was simply a case of learning things about the territory but in fact it was Chalfen and the Holiday on Ice team who knew about the territory, not North and despite a claim that Concello made 30 trips abroad over of three or four years to inspect arenas and gain vital information about touring here. The truth is the Ringling product in 1963 was simply inferior to top circuses in Europe, and the name Greatest Show on Earth had slid into decay. Henry North, his urbane, supporter, commented, "Brother John took the three ring circus to them but they didn't go for it." Nonsense, as Franz Althoff and others had toured three ring shows they were simply of better caliber.

Trolle Rhodin's presence with Ringling in America brought an improvement in the show's artistic content and business improved, but North's interest in the show was flagging and he eventually sold out in 1967 to Irvin and Israel Feld and Roy Hofheinz, relinquishing Ringling ownership of the Barnum and Bailey show. I was able to see an American edition of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, produced by Irvin Feld, in 1971 for the first time and I am convinced that had the show come to Europe at that time, under the inspired guidance of Feld, it would truly have enjoyed a triumphant tour as indubitably The Greatest Show on Earth. The 1963 tour was an unmitigated disaster. It is to be seen if a member of the Feld family will have the courage to come back here at some future date, to follow in the triumphal foot steps Phineas Taylor Barnum and James A. Bailey in the last decade of the 19th century.



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January 26, 27; Fee: \$275

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For Institute Registration/Information call 941.358.3180.

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The Windjammers Unlimited Band 24th Annual Concert

Windjammers Unlimited is a circus musical society dedicated to preserving and performing the music of circus bands of the early Twentieth century.

Saturday, January 27, 2:00 p.m.

The Ringling Museum of Art Courtyard

Free with regular Museum admission

Circus Model Builders International Annual Exhibition

The Circus Model Builders is an organization of skilled modelers recreating the heyday of the great American Circus in miniature. Visit The Circus Museum to see these amazing artisans and their models.

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"RUSSIAN COSSACKS,"

Buffalo Bill's Press Agent, Spins a Tale

By Richard A. Georgian
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This paper was presented at the 2005 Circus Historical Society convention, and is an extract from the author's manuscript Buffalo Bill's Deceit, the Cossack's Curse. The focus of the book is the history of the Russian Cossacks who rode in over fifty American tent shows between 1892 and the 1920's.

I titled this paper "Russian Cossacks, Buffalo Bill's Press Agent, Spins a Tale," because the historical truth I want to reveal concerns those men and women who were billed and promoted as "Russian Cossacks" in American Wild West Shows. The advertising spin generated by Major Burke has stuck to these riders for over one hundred thirteen years.

The genesis for this research was the revelation that my grandfather, Alexis Estatetovich Gogokhia, had ridden for Buffalo Bill's Wild West as a "Russian Cossack" from 1897 to 1899. Alexis then rode for Pawnee Bill in 1900 and 1901, Buckskin Bill in 1902, Luella Forepaugh-Fish in 1903, Campbell Brothers Consolidated Shows in 1904, and then went bankrupt in 1905 when the movie sideshow he was operating failed. He became a political force in Minneapolis politics, but that is another story. I was curious as to why Alexis who was neither ethnically Russian nor a Cossack would have performed as a "Russian Cossack," especially when he had written: "An indisputable fact is that the masses of the Russian nation and of other nation-



Alexis Estatetovich Gogokhia. All illustrations are from the author's collection unless otherwise credited.

alities belonging to Russia are filled with a deep-felt hate toward the Cossacks. This hatred is not limited to the masses in the labor

The Cossacks on Buffalo Bill Wild West in 1896. Pfening Archives.



movement; it is deeply rooted throughout the nation. All classes of the small nationalities, heretofore belonging to the Russian empire, speak of the Cossacks in terms of hatred and loathing.

"The history of the Cossacks is such that these nations look upon a Cossack as upon a man ready to perform any act of utter brutality; a man who mercilessly will flog women and children with his knout; a man who, just for the fun of the thing, will trample under the feet of his horse innocent people, as so often did happen in the long and dark years of the Russian absolutism. The very name of the Cossacks recalls in the minds of the people bitter memories of the cruel days of Russian oppression.

"The Russian people know the Cossack as the arch enemy of all that is human. The Cossack was the cruel tool of the Czarism, a flogger, a torturer, a brutal violator of womanhood—a savage."¹

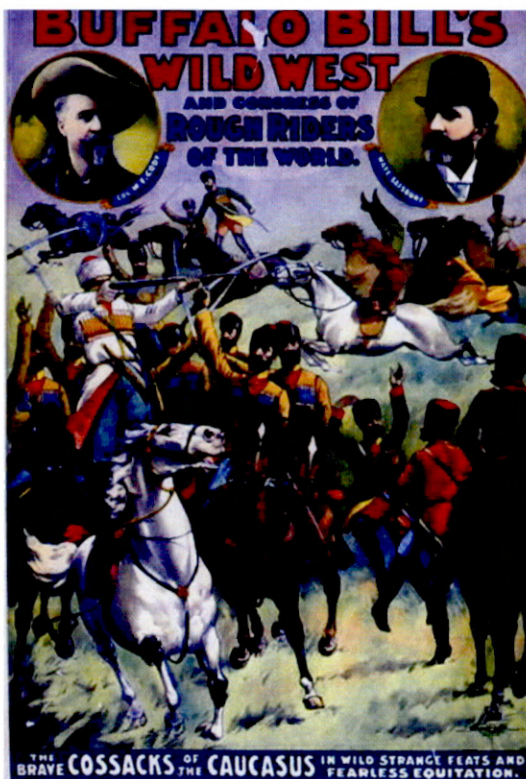
The truth is, the riders who performed in more than fifty different wild west shows from 1892 through to 1920 were neither ethnic Russian nor Cossacks. These men and women

were all Georgians, from what is today the Republic of Georgia, and most of them were from a small state called Guria. They were part of the Czar's empire, and Russian citizens in 1891.

Georgia is at the meeting-point of Europe and Asia, between the Black Sea and the Caspian lowland, on the Caucasian southern slopes. This is the Georgian's motherland, an ethnically diverse ancient culture and civilization; a land immersed in myth, wine

and blood, divided into kingdoms and principalities, and ruled by their own kings and queens for centuries, then overtaken by the army of Czar Alexander I, Russian bureaucrats, aristocrats, and priests. It is a land in which the Czar's policies, from 1801 to 1917, gradually subordinated the Georgian culture and language. It is blessed by temperate weather, fertile fields, and the mystical mountains from which Homer drew his tales, and which one would never want to leave. Nevertheless, for more than twenty eight years, between 1892 and 1920, Georgian men and women stood before their doors and turned several times to the right, hoping for favorable omens before starting their journey to America. Their reasons for leaving home were varied; economic, political, or to escape criminal prosecution by the Czar's police.

Why did Nate Salsbury and William Cody go to all the trouble to bring a group of men from out of nowhere? To answer to this question one has to review the circumstances during the winter of 1890 and the spring of 1891. Two events in 1890 created a situation where Salsbury and Cody needed new acts. First, several American Indians died while touring Russia and Europe in 1890, and then a disgruntled contingent of Buffalo Bill's Indians, Eagle Horn, Blue Rainbow, Little Lamb, Blue Cloud and Kill His Pony, arrived in New York, June 1890. They told stories of maltreatment which led the Indian Commissioner, Thomas Morgan, to ask his Indian agents to make reports on the effect of the show business on the Indians. Some of the letters received by Commissioner Morgan showed conditions so bad that the letters actually were unfit to print even in the government report. The report indicated that the young Indians were ruined morally and physically on those tours, having come into contact with the most vicious elements. Many of them died, and those that returned to the reservations brought with them low estimates of the white man's morals and religion. The returning Indians were



A Buffalo Bill poster showing Cody and Salsbury.

often in such physical condition that they were a menace to the tribe, and sowed the seeds of ailments that were never eradicated from the community. In his 1890 report Commissioner Morgan said: "The influence of these shows is antagonistic to that of the schools," referring to the Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Morgan said: "The schools elevate, the shows degrade. The schools teach industry and thrift, the shows encourage idleness and waste. The schools inculcate morality, the shows lead almost inevitably to vice."

These reports resulted in the Interior Secretary, Mr. Noble, issuing an order in September 1890: "No more Indians will be permitted to leave their reservations to take part in any shows, either here or abroad."²

Buffalo Bill still had two more years to tour in Europe, and foresaw a financial disaster. The American Indians were a staple of his show—without them he had no show. He rushed back to Washington, D.C. to plead his case. Nate Salsbury, Cody's business partner, anticipating a debacle, sent his agents throughout

Europe to find replacement acts for the Indians. He sent Joe Hart to Moscow to find "Russian Cossacks." Mr. Hart came back empty handed, because "Cossacks" were the Czar's personal military force and were not allowed to leave Russia. However, Salsbury had gathered enough riders from Germany, England, and Mexico to replace the Indians, if necessary.

The second event was a spiritual revival among America's Indians. The Indian "Messiah" craze reached a fever pitch by late 1890. A threatened Indian outbreak was viewed by whites as a fanatical religious war, said to be a crusade against the whites, preached by a mysterious Messiah, "Wovoka also known as Jack Wilson" who had appeared to them in Utah and Nevada. The most visible aspect of the "Messiah" craze was the "Ghost Dance" performance. A whole

band—men and women—took part, they danced continually, usually for four successive nights, and the last night they kept it up until the morning of the fifth day, when all bathed in the river and then dispersed to their homes.

The Indians made a circle and moved around a tree. They kept moving around in one direction until almost too dizzy to stand, then turned in the other direction, and kept this up until they fell from exhaustion. Many of them claimed to have seen and heard the "Messiah" after swooning and returning to consciousness. It was said that the "Messiah" spoke to the different tribes in their own languages. The Eastern newspapers misreported what they were told, "They have but to fight for themselves a little and the great spirit will cause the earth to open and swallow the whites, and will bring back from the happy hunting grounds all the buffaloes and dead Indians."³

The Pine Ridge, South Dakota, Indian Agent was frantic and pleaded with the Army for help. The Eastern press stories and the Indian agent's stupidity resulted in Sitting Bull being shot by the Indian reser-

vation police, and the U.S. Army, 7th Cavalry, massacring the Sioux at Wounded Knee Creek in December of 1890. Kicking Bear and the other remaining Sioux Ghost Dance leaders finally surrendered on January 15, 1891. The U.S. Army sent these Indians to Fort Sheridan for two years incarceration,



Gathering the dead at Wounded Knee.

but their fate took a surprising twist. It turned out that the best solution, with the Secretary of War's approval, was for Buffalo Bill to hire the rebellious leaders and take them to Europe for two years. Buffalo Bill's Wild West toured Germany, Belgium, England, and Wales during the 1891 season with the rebellious Ghost Dance Indians as his headlining act along with his newly recruited riders from all over the world (except he did not have Russian Cossacks in 1891).

The final piece of the puzzle of how Georgians ended up riding for Buffalo Bill occurred during the winter of 1891. Mr. C. Malden Ecolè, called the Baron, a Parisian impresario, who was the European talent agent for the Barnum & Bailey circus for many years, arranged for a troupe of "Russian Cossacks" to work for Buffalo Bill during the 1892 season in England.

How did Mr. Ecolè come to send agents to the obscure Russian Province of Georgia to search for a "Russian Cossack" riding act? Was it just an accident of history? The tent show family was a closely knit community, and it is not hard to imagine that someone in the business, in 1891 might have known where to find an exciting Russian riding act.

A Georgian family story, told by the grandson of Ivane Makharadze, the known first leader of "Russian Cossack" riders in Buffalo Bill's Wild west, tells the story of how Ivane got into tent show business. Here is that story as told to Ivane's grandson, Vakho, by his grandmother:

"There was, there was always Makharadzies in the village of Bakhvi. Your ancestors were famous for their superb riding and hawk training. Your great-grandfather, Rostomi, sang folk songs at the table, he rode the fastest horses, and hunt

ed with his trained hawks. He especially liked riding games such as "Tarchia."⁴

"Tarchia," is one of Georgia's oldest riding games, a game of gallantry. The riders chosen to play in this game are usually men who wish to gain the attention of a young lady. The lady in question chooses one of the riders and fastens on his right arm or collar a colored hat. The man who receives this hat is called "Tarchia," and it becomes the goal of the other riders to try and take away the hat. The Tarchia's duty is to try and bring the hat back to the lady. The game begins with the Tarchia and his pursuers separated from each other and the lady at a distance of 100 meters. The lady signals the beginning of the contest. If the

Tarchia can reach the young lady peacefully with the hat he becomes the winner and is rewarded by the lady. If the hat is taken away from the Tarchia the game is stopped and the rider who took the hat becomes the Tarchia himself. He fastens the hat on his arm and the game is continued from the place where it was stopped. The riders must give the new Tarchia a distance of 50 meters, and the game is continued. The game goes on until someone gives the young lady her hat.

Rostomi taught his sons Silibistro, Alexandre, Pavle and Ivane his love of singing, riding and hunting throughout their childhood. That is why two of his sons, Ivane and Pavle became riders, and Alexandre became a singer.

"One day, late in the reign of Czar Alexander II, around 1880, Rostomi sent his 14-year-old son, Ivane, to Bakhmaro is approximately 50 km [30 miles] from Bakhvi, to visit with relatives and escape the summer heat. In those days, we could all go to Bakhmaro whenever we wanted.

"Bakhmaro! God's touch of heaven in our backyard. Just follow our river up into the mountains, through the great gorge. I've told you about the high plateau in the mountains where the air is cool, clear, where the pine trees touch the clouds, where great horse races were held.

"The devil does his work even in God's great creations, just as he can do in you. Bakhmaro is a name out of the Turkish invasions. It happened high up in the herds-men's great plateau before we called it Bakhmaro. Turks came by ship and overland to invade our land, to steal our food, and capture our young women as their concubines. It was on one of these raids that several young maidens including Maro were captured by the Turks. They headed up our river Bakhvis. They say Maro fought her captors, and in the valley, now called Bakhmaro, these Turks slit her throat, mutilated her body and wrote on her chest in Turkish, in her own blood, 'Now

Ivane Makharadze.



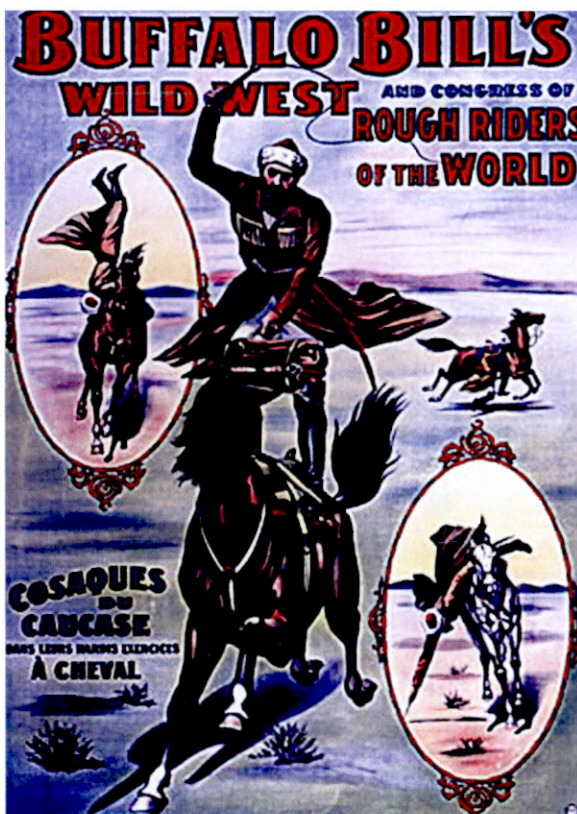
see Maro.' So, we still call this place Bakhmaro, Bakh meaning to see, and Maro meaning Mary in Turkish.

"Rostomi saddled up his favorite horse and told Ivane he could ride him to Bakhmaro. Ivane was honored, proud his father trusted him with his horse, and he rode up the trail along the river. Ivane stopped at Baisuri, a bend in the river gorge just below Bakhmaro, so he could clean up before arriving to meet his friends. His horse uncontrolled was allowed to drink its fill of the cold mountain water. Ivane paid no notice when his horse started pawing the ground or stretching out as if to urinate without doing so. Ivane became concerned when his father's favorite horse repeatedly started lying down and getting up and rolling, especially violent rolling. He first worried about his father's saddle, and then became more concerned with his horses' rapid respiration, flared nostrils and lip curling. This slow painful death, probably from colic, was caused by his stupidity and inattention to an overheated horse and the cold mountain water.

"Ivane struggled to remove the saddle, blanket and bit, and loaded them on his shoulder to return home. It was a long, lonely, walk home, his fears rising with each step. What would his father do or say?

"Rostomi, seeing his son walking into the yard with his saddle and gear draped over his shoulder, worried that his son might be hurt. As Ivane told his story, Rostomi became very angry. He became furious and struck Ivane with his hand. Ivane was ashamed and ran away from home.

"The port of Batumi was called Porto-Franco (Free Port) in those days. Ivane traveled to Batumi, about 60 km [38 miles], and after some days of wandering he met up with two sailors. These sailors worked on a ship as firemen. They took Ivane to the ship's captain, who liked the smart boy and took him on as a fireman also. Next day the ship left Batumi and after fifty days sail-



Courtesy of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals digital collection.

ing came to New York. The young boy was so tired of his hard labor that he refused to continue to work on the ship. His sailor friends took him to a Georgian baker who lived in New York. Ivane worked hard with the baker also, since he had no other way to make a living. He had to work to earn enough to live and learn English. Once he had learned enough English, he ran away from the baker, and joined a New York Arabian Circus and began work as a sweeper.

"Ivane, fond of horses from his childhood, soon caught the attention of an Arabian rider in the circus. The Arab noticed the young man's ability to handle horses, and hired him as a hostler to take care of the horses. Ivane saved his money and was able to buy an Arabian horse. The Arab rider gave Ivane a position as a rider in the show. Ivane in his Georgian dress, (Chokha), would pick up coins thrown on the ground while riding at a gallop.

"The spectators liked the show of this smart boy with a mustache and

applauded him. The Arab increased his wages allowing Ivane to buy a second horse, and then Ivane left the Arab's show. He created his own separate circus show with his two horses, and soon made more money. With money in his pocket he wrote to his parents and told them his address and promised to come back home soon. In 1885 Ivane returned to his father's home here in Bakhvi.

"That is your grandfather's story."

After Ivane's return, Rostomi Makharadze gave each son a separate place up on the hill overlooking Bakhvi to live. Nowadays, this place is called "The hill of the Makharadzes." Ivane decided to build a new house with eight rooms in the American style on his plot of ground. Unfortunately in 1917 (during the communist revolution)

someone set a fire at the front door of his house. He and his wife escaped, but the house and all the memorabilia were destroyed.

There are two Georgian sources that chronicle Ivane Makharadze's 1892 entry into American wild west show history. One source are interviews with the last known survivors of these riders in 1958 by a professor of Georgian history in Tbilisi, Amiran Tsamtsishvili.⁵ Amiran Tsamtsi-shvili, *The Georgian Riders Aboard*, Tbilisi, 1958.

A second source is a dispatch from the port city Poti printed in the Tbilisi newspaper *Iveria*, Tuesday, June 16, 1892. Each of these sources provide insight into how Ivane Makharadze and his troupe of riders ended up in London in May of 1892.

The survivors story began in early 1887 with a ship from America arriving in Batumi. Mr. Thomas Oliver, a representative of a big circus company came to bring back Cossack riders from Russia. Mr. Oliver stayed with the American consul, John Chambers. There he met Kirile Jorbenadze, Mr. Chamber's butler. When Kirile Jorbenadze learned why their guest had come all the way from the United States, he promised to help

Mr. Oliver find excellent Georgian riders. Obtaining permission from Russian authorities, Kirile Jorbenadze with vice consul Harry R. Briggs and Thomas Oliver went to Lanchkhuti. They stopped at the Makharadze family home in the village Bakhvi and talked to Mr. Ivane Makharadze the famous rider in those parts. The memory and knowledge of these old men in 1958 demonstrate how stories pass through the ages and become slightly distorted.



Trick riding in London.

A contemporary newspaper dispatch from the port city Poti was printed in the Tbilisi newspaper *Iveria*, Tuesday, June 16, 1892. This account binds together the Kirile family history and the survivors' memories.

"Some Georgian riders are in London, and they amused the frown and reserved people of England with their show and songs. It's interesting who these Georgians are. Since your newspaper has its eye on Georgians all over the world, I considered it necessary to inform you about the Georgians that left for London six months ago. They are from Guria, namely from Chibati and Lanchkhuti. They belong to different levels of society, but the majority of them are landlords. You might be

The Gurian riders in London.



surprised imagining Gurians in London. But, there is nothing surprising: two months ago the Consul of England in Batumi hosted a rich man from abroad. That person was called 'an English Lord' in Georgia. The guest was fascinated by the appearance and cloths of the Gurians that were present at the meeting. He asked his Gurian host to find 12 handsome fellows, good riders and singers in order to take them to England. The promise was to pay 50 rubles each, per month, and cover all travel expenses to and from England. They obtained the permission from the Governor, and two months ago they left for abroad."

Whether or not one believes the Makharadze grandmother's tale or the old rider's reminiscences, the fortunes of Ivane, his relatives, and friends in Guria were changed forever due to American Indian problems

in 1890 and 1891. Ivane Makharadze and his companions were about to ride onto the world stage in American tent shows, due to a calamity which befell some native American Indians.

Was there a connection between the story of Ivane Makharadze coming to America, and the life of Tom Oliver? Who, it was reported, had been abandoned in Tbilisi as a child. He reportedly learned Russian and Georgian, and then came back to Batumi and found Ivane Makharadze. Had they met in New York?

Ivane Makharadze and the others left their Gurian homes in early May 1892.⁶ They came down from the hills and valleys of Guria, and traveled the thirty eight miles [60 km] to Batumi. Ivane's instructions were to collect their tickets and itinerary from a shipping company office in Batumi. The ticketing agent took the ten fledgling country men to the Russian administrative building to gather their passports. Each in turn stood before the administrative clerk presented his papers and furnished his name, age, and village. The clerk recorded the passport information in Georgian, Russian, and French. The clerk demanded payment, and made an impressive show of stamping the documents before handing them over. They were hustled down to the docks, and caught a steamship that sailed between Batumi and Marseilles with a short stop in Constantinople. By the time they reached Marseilles, they were sea-hardened travelers. These men who had only known travel by horseback next learned to travel by train, arriving at the Garè de Lyon in Paris. They visited the offices of Mr. C.M. Ecolè, and then on to the French coast and a packet steamer to England. These travel arrangements were made by Barnum and Bailey's travel agent, Edwin Low. The "Russian Cossacks," from the state of Guria, arrived at Earls Court on May 26, 1892. Ivane Rostom Makharadze was now titled, in the English press, "Prince Makharadze."

The history of how the Georgians came to Buffalo Bill's Wild West is

not definitive, but we do have some facts as recorded in an English document, *The Sportsman*, May 20, 1892. "The Cossacks who are to take part in Buffalo Bill's Wild West have only just arrived in Paris on their way to London." The first important recorded discussion of Buffalo Bill's new "Cossack" riders was published May 28, 1892, in *The Oracle*. Mr. Nate Salsbury, the Wild West entertainment general manager and business brains, is quoted as saying:

"(The Cossacks) arrived last night. They come from beyond Tiflis (Tbilisi), near the extreme of the Caucasus Mountains. They are headed by Prince Ivan Makhadarze, and are under the charge of an interpreter called Tom, whose life is a romance in itself. These are genuine Don Cossacks, and we claim they are the first of their class who has ever left their country except in a war. The Cossack is different from a cowboy, in as much as, he is really a soldier and a part of the Russian Army.

Their riding consists mainly of tricks on horseback, and I am very anxious to see what they can do in that line. We cannot try them yet, as their wiry little horses need rest after their long journey. These men were brought over by the energy and enterprise of M. Ercolè, the great Parisian agent, who was nearly in prison half a dozen times over his job. We have had to guarantee the return of these men to the Russian government, our Ambassador in St. Petersburg being the guarantor. We shall probably get these men to ride next week."

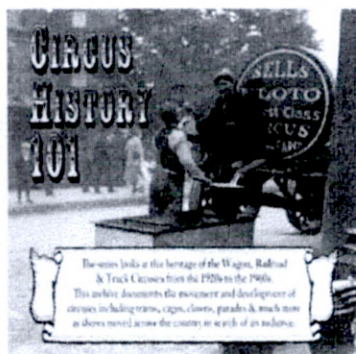
They did ride, and became the star performers of the 1892 season. Queen Victoria ordered a special performance at Windsor Castle, and Buffalo Bill would always have a contingent of "Russian Cossack" riders in every show he managed or performed in until his death in 1917. The Georgian riders felt cursed being called "Cossacks," especially after the 1905 failed revolution in Georgia,

where the Czar's Cossacks trampled the people of Guria under their hooves. The story line that Major Burke, Nate Salsbury, and William Cody devised to advertise their "Russian Cossacks" can be found in the 1892 program. This basic story line would follow the Georgians up to the end of their riding careers, and into history.

NOTES

1. "The Cossack Counter Revolution," *The New Times*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, December 29, 1917."
2. "Indians Must Stay at Home." *New York Times*, October 1, 1890, p. 8 col. 4.
3. "The American Red Indian 'Messiah.'" *The New York Times*, November 1890.
4. *Georgian Riding Games*, Kapitón Nachkehia, pps. 45 and 46.
5. Aniran Tsamtsishvili, *The Georgian Riders Aboard*, Tbilisi, 1958.
6. "News from Batumi." *Iveria*, No. 127, Friday, June 19, 1892, p. 2.

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Great Circus Clowns of the Past

From Pat Cashin's Blog



Lou Jacobs one of the most recognized clown faces, was in the Ringling alley over 60 years. He is credited with many gags, notably his midget car. He was named "Master Clown" by Ringling.



Otto Griebing, another ace producing clown, was boss clown on Cole Bros. for many years before moving to Ringling. He is considered by most historians and fans to be the finest (and funniest) American circus clown of the 20th century.



Glen "Frosty" Little had some experience on carnivals and small shows before enrolling in the first class of Clown College in 1968. He eventually became boss clown on both the Red and Blue units. He was the last person named "Master Clown."



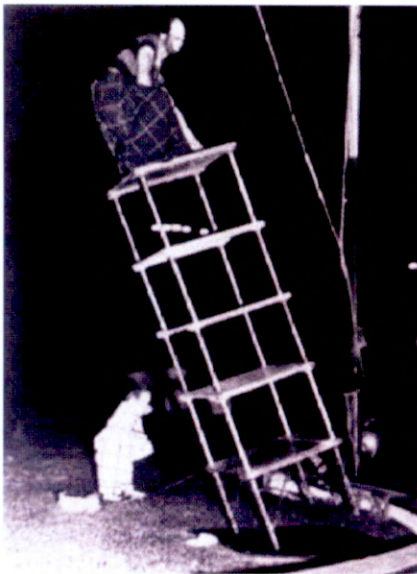
Bumpy Anthony began clowning in 1916. He was with Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty in 1935 and Tom Mix in 1937. This photo was taken when he appeared at the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota, Florida.



Bobby Kay had a long Ringling career both as advance clown and show clown before he began teaching at Clown College. Bobby was in charge of the makeup classes there for several years. He was a "Master Clown."



Ernie "Blinko" Burch was well known for his giant false eye lashes. He was with Ringling-Barnum in the 1950s. Burch also worked many Shrine circuses. His balloon routine was his big feature.



Dime Wilson's Table Rock. One time the stack of tables buckled in the middle and he came down face first, breaking his jaw.



Joe Jackson, Jr. inherited (and further honed) his tramp clown makeup and character, as well as a breakaway bicycle act from his father.



A. Robbins, the Banana Man was featured in Ringling's Madison Square Garden's Spangles in 1943.



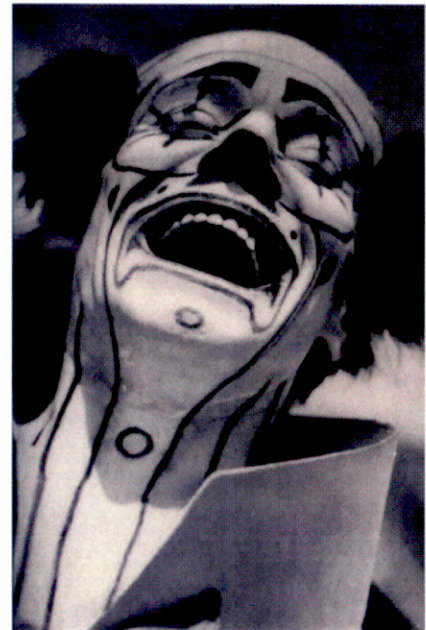
Felix Adler started on Ringling Bros. in 1912. He returned in 1916 and spent the rest of his career there. He was genius at training pigs for his clown acts.



Paul Jerome's career began in 1910. He was with Sells-Floto for five years and Hagenbeck-Wallace for three years before going to Ringling for twenty-five years.



"Prince Paul" Albert (seen here without makeup) was with Ringling for many years, working closely with producing clown Paul Jung,



Paul "Chesty" Mortier was born in Belgium. He started with Ringling Bros. in 1915 and remained there until his retirement.

To see many more of Pat Castin's extensive clown photos go to:

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Bill Woodcock's Circus Album

This is a nice looking picture of a Sparks Circus parade in 1922. You can almost hear the calliope playing. That's Louie Reed riding the first elephant with Walter McLain atop the third one. From front to back the elephants are: Topsy, Sparks Queen, Barnum Queen, Myrtle, Bonnie, and Babe.

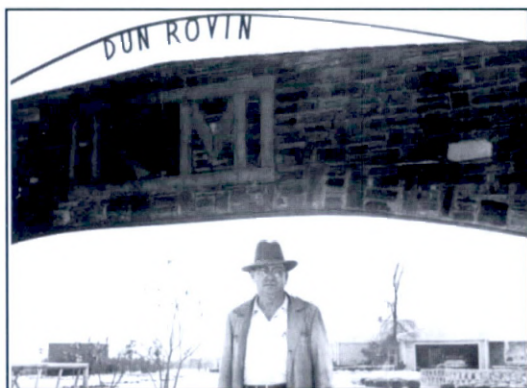
Babe died with Stevens Bros. Circus while wintering at the fairgrounds in Hugo, Oklahoma in February 1951. I remember it well. Kelly Miller, D. R.'s brother, was in the process of building his large estate across from the Kelly-Miller Circus winter quarters and upon Babe's death he had her carcass skinned, the hide tanned and made into things like sofas, etc. that were placed in the vast basement that served as a recreation room. He gave my dad a pair of elephant skin house slippers which he promptly threw away.



following day while trying to purchase a car with silver dollars.

The front gate of Kelly's estate was built with a low archway across the driveway since he wanted to make sure D. R. couldn't park any show trucks in his back yard. One night a fire broke out, gutting the entire estate, Babe and all. The fire department was hindered when the archway took the top off the fire engine.

The next photo shows Kelly Miller in front of house. Note the words "Dun



This rec. room had an elaborate bar and a pool table in one end. Babe's head was mounted above the bar. Stamped into the front of the bar were several thousand silver dollars that spelled "Kelly's Silver Dollar Bar." Not too much later while the show was on the road, several of Hugo's more astute criminals broke into the house and pried loose all the coins. The geniuses were arrested the

Rovin" above his initials on the arch. Kelly died in 1960.

When the John Robinson Circus went off the road after the 1911 season, the Robinson family

booked their four elephants into fairs, celebrations, parks and especially vaudeville. At one point the elephants were shipped out to the Seilig Zoo in Los Angeles, probably to do some movie work. Tim Buckley trained them at the turn of the century, but by the time of our third photo Dan "Curley" Noonan was presenting them. Their names were Tillie, Clara, Tony and Pitt (Petite).

Of all the vaudeville skits they did the war number is best remembered. In fact, they became known as the John Robinson Military Elephants. I



have a publicity photo showing a soldier with a machine gun on top of one of them, but the act didn't include this type of weaponry, although they did have a cannon on stage that was fired. In another bit of business one of the elephants would skip around holding up a front leg that had been bandaged, having been wounded in combat. The highlight was two elephants carrying a mortally wounded soldier, Noonan, back from the front lines. For the blow-off an elephant would pull down the German flag and the raise Old Glory.

My dad worked with the Robinson elephants for a while. The next picture shows him on the left with them in 1931 at St. Thomas, Ontario with the St. Leon Bros. Circus. With him are George "Red Cap" Thompson and Sean "Cactus" LaFleur. Dad was with the Sells Floto Circus from 1930 to 1932, and as I understand it, Zack Terrell, the Floto show's manager, sent my dad over to the Robinsons to help with their elephants. Terrell was very good friends with the Robinson family.

My dad told me that it was not an easy job, the elephants having been in the Robinson family so long he was given a long list as to how they



should be worked and endless instructions. He said the thing he hated most was that Tillie would make a peculiar noise on command which might be construed as "Ma, Ma." It was included in the act. The band would stop playing and a lengthy announcement would be made. Tillie would go "Ma Ma." Then to my dad's chagrin he would have to walk over close to her and whisper, "Louder, you son of a bitch." Then she would go "MA MA!" All in all, I think he was glad to get back to the Floto show.

Later, the Robinson family gave Pitt to Zack Terrell when he owned the Cole Bros. Circus. Pitt was killed after being struck by lightning on August 6, 1943 at Dillon, Montana. A marker placed on the spot where she was killed stated she was 102 years old. Some years back I received a letter from a college in that area asking information on Pitt, and what battles she might have been in

(her marker said she was the "Last of the John Robinson Herd of Military Elephants"). I made the mistake of explaining that her reputed age of 102 years was just a "feel good" number which people wanted to hear. In fact, she wasn't even half that age. Furthermore, I told them she had no military record other than the skirmishes she underwent at such places as the Palace Theater.

Damned if I didn't get letters back questioning my accuracy and citing documents of hundred year old elephants and their wars. Now I was sorry I had ever opened the first letter. I assume

they must have had an agenda or even a Federal Grant they were trying to justify.

Arky Scott, the Cole show elephant boss in 1943, told me it was a rainy night and as was customary, the elephants were being herded in an open area waiting for their act while the menagerie was being taken down. Suddenly, a lightning bolt struck Pitt, killing her instantly and knocking down the elephant on each side of her. Needless to say everything was pandemonium until order was restored. In Arky's words, the lightning "busted every gut in her."

The fifth photo is Colonel Tim McCoy in 1959 with the Carson & Barnes Circus. On the Colonel's left is the show's owner, Jack Moore.

This might take a little explanation. Jack Moore was another Hugo, Oklahoma showman who D. R. Miller took under his wing. In 1954 D. R. leased him Mabel, his first elephant for the fledgling Tex Carson Circus. While I was away in the Army my dad booked our elephants on his little show which solved his driver problem (he didn't drive), and by 1958 Moore had done so well that he now had three elephants, Mabel,



Josky, and Jenny, and a new title, Carson & Barnes.

After Moore's unexpected death from cancer, D. R. bought out Moore's interest, and added it to his own show. For some reason Miller disposed of the old Al G. Kelly and Miller Bros. title and from then on used Carson & Barnes. Sixteen years later, in 1985, when David Rawls took out his show from Hugo he decided to bring back the old title, but cut it back to just Kelly-Miller.

John Ringling North, on the left along with brother Henry in 1938, was quite the socialite and casual man about town, spending most of his time in Europe.

He was not a "hands on" type owner as we see today. When the show was in Sarasota during the winter he would reside at the John Ringling Towers and after arising at the crack of noon he might be driven out to the quarters, ride his horse for a while, entertain a few people in his railroad car, stop by the office to sign a few papers and maybe even watch rehearsals, but I'm sure he didn't meddle. That's what John Murray Anderson was paid for and who probably wouldn't have listened anyway.

Then it was back to the Ringling Towers and after dining with friends



they would all make an entrance into the Mme. Toto Lounge well after midnight when the flotsam and jetsam had departed and spend the rest of the night in recreation.

After the dress rehearsal in Madison Square Garden, North and his entourage, all formally dressed, would depart for the Stork Club where he would then do his act and in so doing managed to induce such people as George Balanchine and Igor Stravinsky to become involved with the show.

After the Ringling show closed under canvas in 1956 and became successfully established in buildings,

North sold the show to Roy Hofheinz and Irvin and Israel Feld in 1967. He then returned to Europe, resumed his usual lifestyle, and outlived all three of his successors.

And last, but not least, we have the dazzling Barbara Woodcock. Barbara had several leopards over the years. This was the best of them, Nirvana. This picture was taken in 1974 shortly after the Ringling park's opening.

The winter of 1977-1978 we were in rehearsal in Venice prior to taking our elephant herd on the Blue Show. I was holding a string of spec elephants near the back door one day, chatting with Gunther Gebel-Williams when Barbara came by with a new young leopard and handed me the leash, saying "Hold this. I forgot something." She was barely out of sight when something frightened the cat and she took off, wrapping the leash around my leg several times. So here I am, doing the Mexican Hat Dance, trying to get untangled while Gunther is trying to keep a straight face. The dirty little bitch bit me on the leg. After Barbara returned and as I went limping off with the elephants into the arena, thoroughly humiliated, he casually mentioned, "You ought to get a shot for that."



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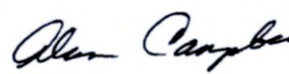
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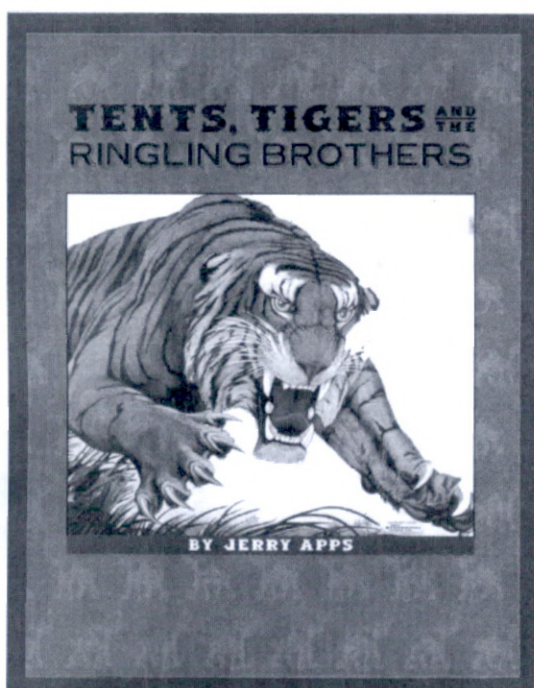
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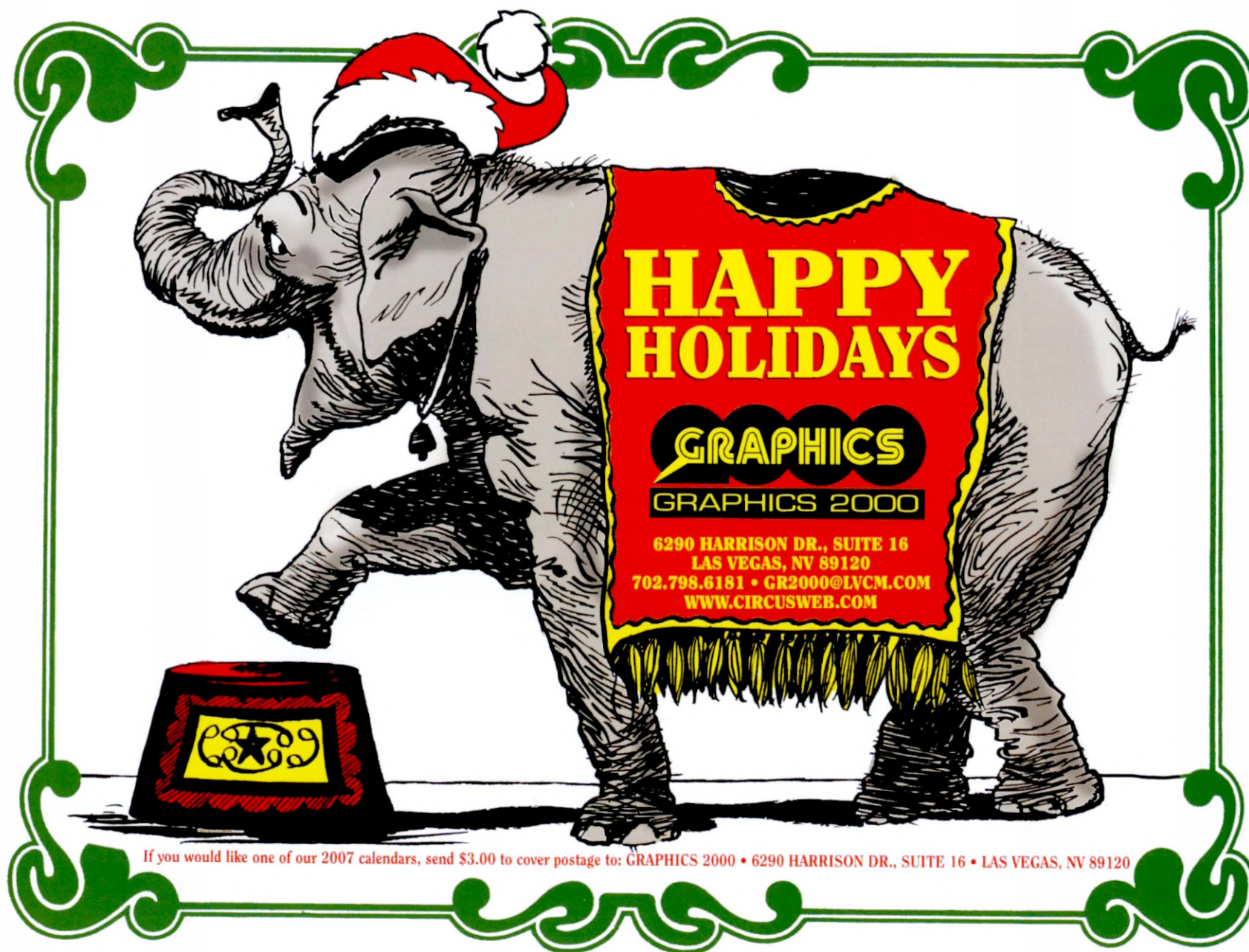
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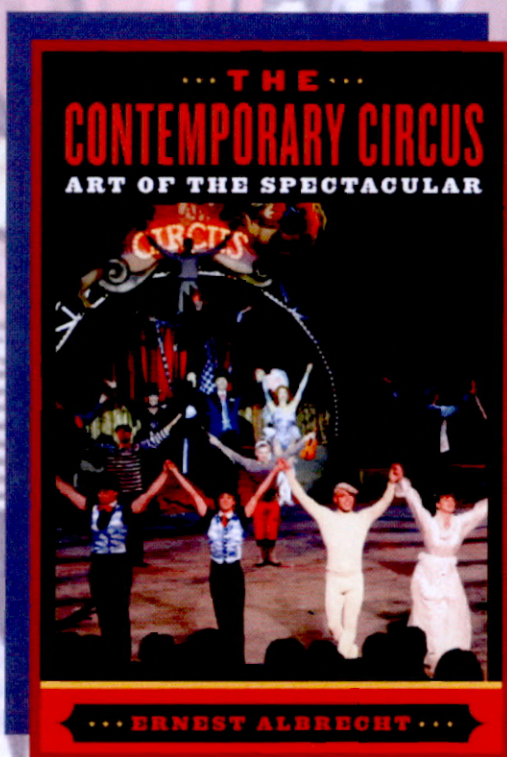
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Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART FORTY EIGHT

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the dates the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Daily Gazette.

October 8, 1919

Monday last I was summoned to the office of the Chamber of Commerce to meet the new secretary, George F. Wells, the messenger saying that Mr. Wells had a message for me from an old friend living in his hometown of Corning, New York. It was an old friend by the name of John Worland to whom I said goodbye 30 years ago, the 13th of this month at Alliance, Ohio. If my memory serves me right, John Worland quit the show business and settled down in Corning about that time or shortly after.

John, at that time, was one of the greatest athletes in the country and was featured with the old Adam Forepaugh show as the greatest leaper in the world. He could turn

doubles from a spring board over elephants and horses both afternoon and evening.

Turns Triple in Air

At one time in the dressing room John said that he could turn a triple and the only request he would make would be for another bed tick to light on which would make the lighting place twice the present size, as turning three times in the air he would not be so sure of his landing. Shortly after the news reached Mr. Forepaugh, he summoned John to the front door and told him he would bet him \$100 that he could not turn a triple, and he would also furnish an extra tick to prevent an accident in landing.

The bet was made and Adam

John Worland somersaulted over elephants as in this illustration. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.



Forepaugh immediately sent his newspapermen ahead to advertise it. While John Worland turned the trick and won the \$100, Adam Forepaugh won many times that, for the afternoon house was packed to the ring bank to witness the great leaper. The next day Adam Forepaugh told John Worland that he would pay him \$100 a week extra if he would turn one triple every afternoon and evening. This Worland refused to do as he said it would only be a matter of time until he would break his neck.

Wells is Recommended

As for me, Mr. Wells could not come with a better recommendation than that John Worland was his closest friend.

For in all my experience in the business, I never knew a finer man. I never will forget the first time that John Worland came after his salary. He was among the headliners in the business. I handed him his money first and he walked away from the wagon smiling.

I said to myself, "No wonder he smiles. If I could draw his salary, I would put a smile on which would not come off."

This was natural with Worland whether doing his act in the big top or among his friends in the dressing room or at the ticket wagon on salary day, the smile was just the same. Mr. Wells informed me that Worland is one of the leading businessmen in Corning. He is in the wood and coal business. He is a 33rd degree Mason

and is making every effort possible to erect a Masonic temple in Corning. This can be truly said of John Worland--that he is one high-class performer that has quit the business and has made good in his hometown. He is one of the many others that I have always wanted to meet again and visit over the old days.

Entertain invalid Soldiers

Over 625 invalid soldiers at Camp Aurora Hospital, Colorado Springs, Colorado, were given a treat a few days ago when a performance was staged for them under the personal direction of Fred

Bradna and John Agee, equestrian directors of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. The program ran as follows, headed by Merle Evans' All-Star circus band:

John Shubert did a contortion act that went over big, followed by Montana Jack Ray, Wild West trick rope and Tillie Giller, the California girl who made the sick forget the illness for the time being. Then came Pat and Laura Valdo throwing boomerangs which was a new thing to the boys and took them by storm. The jokers then tumbled in with their funny clown numbers which caused real hearty laughs. They were Gene Dekos, Jimmy Sprigg and Harry Clemings. Buck Baker and Tommy Martin were also there and that Ford did things there that it never did at the show. It had the soldiers guessing how it worked. Jack Hedder, Billy Roscoe, Danny London and Al Sylvester kept the crowd laughing with their comedy acrobatic act. The Belfords followed with their acrobatic act which scored heavily. The program was brought to a close by Harry Long who did a head-balancing number that the boys will never forget.

Horses Killed

According to the reports from Sapulpa, Oklahoma, 12 horses of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows were killed and one brakeman injured Tuesday morning, September 16, when the third section of the circus train was derailed as it was passing through Milfay, 35 miles southwest of Sapulpa. It is said that the train hit an open switch and that four cars were completely demolished. It is further said that 75 horses were injured, some of them so badly that they had to be shot.

The Ringling and Barnum show was en route to Tulsa, Oklahoma from Oklahoma City (where it drew packed tents September 15), when the accident occurred. The Tulsa engagement, it is reported, was canceled, the show going direct to Okmulgee where it was scheduled to appear September 17.

The third section of the show consisted of about thirty cars and an engine.

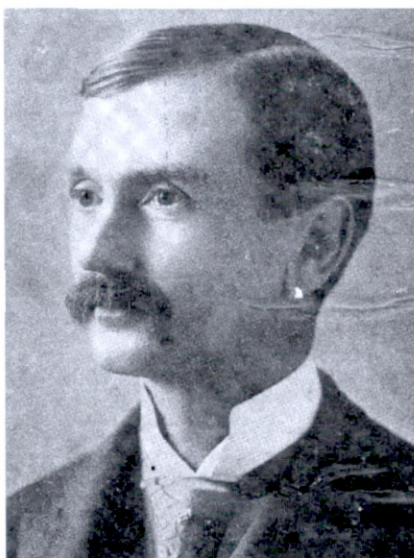
October 11, 1919

Last week I told you something about the achievements of John Worland, whose real name was John Comosh. He was a native of Portugal, but left his native country and joined the circus, coming to this country when quite a young man. He proved to be the greatest athlete in his line of work ever seen in this country. His triple somersault from a springboard more than 30 years ago still stands as a world's record. The great athletes of today in speaking of Worlan's work will tell you that there is a reason for it, for it was shortly after this, that the leaps from a springboard were abolished, giving way to other lines of work. Be this as it may, John Worland's record still stands.

Another performer in the year of '84 who created a sensation all over the county was a Japanese boy known as Little Alright. Alright stood less than 5 feet high, and in weight would not vary much from a hundred pounds either way. His act was called "slide for life" on a tight wire stretched from the center of one center pole to the bottom of another.

He would ascend a rope ladder to the top of the tent and balance himself on the wire. He would come down at lightning speed. Little Alright was one of the big salaried men with the show, and although he did not talk the language plainly, he was good company.

David W. Watt, author of this series. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.



As that was his first year in America, he had never been with a big show before. It looked wonderful to him. When not doing his act, he could be seen around the show in different places, watching the big crowds that would throng the tents. Several times I have seen him away out in front of the ticket wagon watching the thousands that were crowding around, waiting for the ticket wagon to open.

One day he came long before time for the wagon to open and asked me if he could not stand in the other end of the wagon, in through the wire cage and watch me sell tickets. I said, "Better than that Alright, you can come in to my end of the wagon and sit on the flat express safe where my wife has often sat and watch me work."

At different times he picked up dollars, halves and quarters and laid them up on the shelf, especially in big crowds so that I would not run out of change, as all the money coming into the wagon went onto the floor. This pleased the Japanese boy. As the crowd happened to be a big one, when Mr. Forepaugh sent me word to close down the wagon as there was no more room inside, the Japanese boy clapped his hands and said, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

"Mr. Watt, this has certainly been a great treat for me. I will go back into the dressing room and while I am dressing for my act, I will tell the boys that there will be no question about our salary on Wednesday, for there are bucketsful of money lying on the floor."

When Alright had any friends visiting him he would always bring them out to the ticket wagon and watch me sell tickets through the heavy woven wire door.

The following clipping from a Corning, New York paper was sent to George F. Wells, Janesville's new secretary of the Chamber of Commerce:

"Before George F. Wells, the retiring secretary of the Corning Chamber of Commerce left for his new field of labor in Janesville, Wisconsin, in a chance conversation he had with John Comosh, Corning's famous old-time circus performer, he learned from Mr. Comosh that the latter had a friend, another oldtime circus man, David Watt, who is living

in Janesville. This morning Mr. Comosh had a letter from Mr. Wells stating that he had met Mr. Watt since arriving in the western city and had an interesting conversation with him during which he had heard much of Mr. Comosh's early experience in the circus world.

"Mr. Watt was the ticket seller with the Adam Forepaugh circus 33 years ago when Mr. Comosh traveled with the Forepaugh circus. Mr. Watt was also the treasurer of the show. He related to Mr. Wells the conditions under which Mr. Comosh, whose circus name was 'John Worland,' came first to turn the triple somersault. Mr. Comosh was the first man to accomplish this difficult feat and live to tell the tale.

"Mr. Watt is now writing a series of articles telling of his circus experience which is appearing in one of the Janesville papers."

October 18, 1919

A friend of mine a few days ago told me that he had read my *Side Lights on the Circus* and seldom missed one.

"While you have taken us from the ticket wagon to the dressing room," he said, "and told us many interesting stories of the great athletes in the big shows, I can't remember as you ever told us anything about the side show. I have many times listened to the orators in front of the sideshow telling of the freaks of nature and the monstrosities to be seen inside. Some of them proved to be interesting talkers."

One of the first side show talkers whom I knew was with the Burr Robbins show. Possibly some of the older citizens will remember him as for several winters he made his home in Janesville. His name was Colonel Goshem. While he was not as pleasing a talker to listen to as some others, he was always on the job and a hard worker.

A few years later with the Forepaugh show, there were two men who made what they called the opening after the parade. Their names were Frank Morris and Dan Green.

Always Had New Story

They were both high salaried men. In making the opening of the side show they would seldom tell the

same story. This made it interesting for me to listen to them, as my ticket wagon was always located opposite the main entrance to the sideshow.

This was in 1882, my first year with the Forepaugh show. It was September 4, that the show reorganized in St. Louis for a long run through the southern country.

Our first stand outside of St. Louis was Cairo, Illinois. After making a few stands between there and New Orleans, the show opened there for a three weeks' run. On Sunday we showed three times, forenoon, afternoon and evening.

This was about the time that the New Orleans lottery was running at its height and everyone around the show was buying lottery tickets with every dollar they could spare.

Green was Discharged

Dan Green was one of the heavy buyers. In some way, he and Adam Forepaugh had a disagreement and Dan Green was discharged. When the news spread around the show, everyone was surprised and two or three people tried to patch up the difference, but in vain.

As Dan Green did not have a dollar, he was the most dejected looking man that I ever saw, high class in his business, but without a dollar in a strange town.

I took a paper and started a subscription for him and raised \$285, called him into the wagon and presented him with the money.

When I handed it to him, he broke down and cried like a child. He said it was certainly kind of the boys to give him such a purse and that he would go to St. Louis where he had a married sister and spend the winter.

Shortly after he arrived in St. Louis, he was taken sick and in a few weeks, we received word that Dan Green was dead. I don't think that I have ever seen his equal in front of the sideshow since.

Tattooed Woman Exhibited

Irene Woodard was a Philadelphia girl and one of the first tattooed women to go on exhibition. She stayed with the show several years, receiving as high as \$150 a week.

She died about two years ago at her home in Philadelphia. Miss Woodard saved her money and when

she retired from the business several years ago, she owned a nice home in that city and a business building which brought her in a good income.

Monkey Escapes Circus

A monkey escaped from the Al G. Barnes circus in Springfield, Ohio and took up temporary quarters in a grocery store some distance from the lot. A police officer was called to take charge of the situation, and he in turn appealed to what he believed more practical aid in the way of a local veterinarian, who arrived on the scene armed with numerous ropes, a few cages and other implements of capture. Shortly an attache of the show appeared and after smiling at the (to him) amusing situation, called out in a pleasant but commanding voice: "Come here," whereupon all excitement ceased and Mr. Monkey calmly returned to his chattering friends. How would you have liked to understand "monkey talk" and been around that cage when the runaway returned?

Chief J. H. [Jess] Adkins, U.S.N.R.F., has just completed an extensive tour of the west with the special train sent out by the navy for recruiting purposes. Mr. Adkins, who is detailed to the U.S. Navy Publicity Bureau, New York, had charge of the press work on this trip and for which he has been highly commended from Washington. He has now been ordered east to assist Lieut. Commander Wells Hawks, publicity officer of the navy, who is now in New York, looking after the service's big advertising campaign for recruits. Mr. Adkins was for years on the staff of Ringling Bros.

October 25, 1919

On Wednesday last, the news reached us announcing the death of Alfred Ringling, the fifth of the famous Ringlings to pass away. Alf T. Ringling was 56 years old, which to me seems too young for him to be called away so soon after reaching the pinnacle of his life's ambition, that of owning and controlling the largest show of its kind in the world. Alf T. was of a genial disposition, a ready visitor, and whether being introduced to a stranger or meeting an old friend, his face wore the same smile which indicated that the pleasure was all his.

He is the fifth of the seven brothers to pass to the world beyond, leaving only two, John of New York and Charles of Evanston, Illinois.

Dined with Circus People

It seems only a few years ago that my wife and I visited the show at Beloit and took dinner with the Ringlings and their wives who had come down from Baraboo. On that day they put up the finest equipped tent for eating that I ever saw. The canvas, the tables and furnishings were all new and they were justly proud of them. When we entered the cook tent for dinner, Alf T. Ringling told me that there were over 700 seated at dinner at one time.

Of the five boys who passed away, all lived to see their ambition realized, that of owning and controlling the largest show in the world.

The show at present is in the far west and all reports indicate that this has been a banner season. While there has been no date fixed for closing the show, it is expected to go south and not close until nearly Christmas. With the exception of two towns in Texas where they were rained out, Beaumont and San Antonio, the balance of Texas showed big receipts.

Last of Forepaughs Died

In speaking of famous men passing away soon to be forgotten, it was only a few months ago that the last one of the famous Forepaughs, Adam Jr., died. The Forepaugh name had been famous all over the world for nearly half a century, yet when Adam Jr., the last one of the family passed away, the largest paper in Philadelphia had not more than half a dozen lines of the death of the great showman. It simply announced his death, saying that at one time he was famous in circus business.

Left \$5,000 Estate

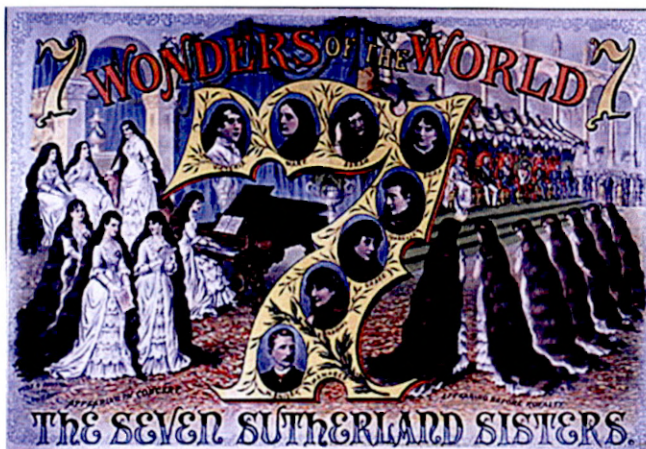
Buffalo, N. Y. - A late return from Lockport, N. Y. says: "Sarah Sutherland, one of the seven Sutherland sisters, noted for their long and beautiful hair hanging to the ground, who died September 4, left an estate of \$5,000, all personal, according to letters of administration granted to Grace Sutherland, another

sister. Three sisters now survive, the others being Dora and Mary. The seven sisters toured the world with the Barnum & Bailey circus many years ago."

Closing Time is Near

Closing time is drawing near; some circus hands have already played the most emotional, plaintive selection of the entire season. "Home Sweet Home" at least for the troupers. Without question there is no other profession wherein the representatives look forward with the same feeling of fraternalism, as does a "circus family" to the end of their season's labors and the parting with their associates. That "lump" of emotion involuntarily rises in the throat, no matter what the degree of longing for the meeting of loved ones at home, or how unsentimental some may seem--no one escapes it. It is at this time that all the latent love for the coworker in each and every circus man or woman is brought to the surface. It has been thus--always.

Adam Forepaugh, Jr.



A lithograph featuring the Sutherland Sisters. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals digital collection.

Loses Two Stands

The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows were obliged to pass up Beaumont, Texas, where they were booked for October 4, on account of a heavy rain. It was late next morning (Sunday) before they were able to get away from there. On top of this there was a wash-out between Beaumont and San Antonio, causing quite a delay in reaching the latter city, booked for October 6. Beautiful weather prevailed in San Antonio when the show arrived, but Monday it rained so hard that it was impossible to give the scheduled performances. For a while it looked as though Austin, the next stand, would be lost but such was not the case.

The Elks with the show had planned to give a banquet and dance at San Antonio, but had to call it off on account of the late arrival. The show, in spite of all these troubles, has been doing an immense business through Texas.

November 1, 1919

In speaking of the rough towns that the big shows would show in years ago, like Johnstown, Bradford and Scranton, Pennsylvania; Youngstown, Ohio and several others where the big rolling mills employed thousands of hands, while these were to be dreaded even by the large shows, there were others, and among them were a few college towns where the students at times would rule the towns.

In one town in particular where there were hundreds of college boys who had evidently got it in for a merchant only two or three days before we showed there, 20 or more of them got a large timber, put sticks under it and men got on either side and some time after midnight marched down the street and drove the large timber which they were carrying, driving the entire front windows into the store.

When we arrived there with the Forepaugh show, the town was practically in the hands of the students and when the parade went out, Billy Burke, the famous clown and father of Billie Burke, the famous actress, was riding in a small two-wheeled cart drawn by a donkey. A dozen or more of the students followed along opposite him, many of them carrying bean blowers and shooting the beans into Burke's face until he finally lost his temper and turning to the crowd, he addressed his conversation to a big, tall fellow who had extra large ears standing straight out from his head and said to him: "All you have got to do is to keep on tormenting me and by the time I get ready to leave town, I will be wearing those elephant ears of yours for buttons."

Makes Hit with Students

This made a hit with the students

Billie Burke's songster on Barnum & London in 1881.



and in the evening they came up to the show, some 700 or 800, in a bunch and as they marched into the tent they were singing: "Burke, Burke, we want Burke!" They would not be quieted until Burke had come into the ring and made a little speech to the boys of the difference between the beautiful college there in town and the little country school house in which he received his education. He then sang them a song and retired to the dressing room, the students being well pleased and ready for the balance of the show to proceed.

Mr. Forepaugh always thought if it had not been for Burke making a hit with them while in the parade they might have created a disturbance at the show in the evening. When it looked as though trouble could not be avoided [?] he would appear with what he called his melting powers [?] always saying the right thing at the right time and the trouble as a rule would all blow over.

Although Billy Burke was only a clown, in many towns he was the man of the hour, and I think had more friends in the show business and out than almost anyone around the show. Although he died some years ago, he lived to see his only child, Billie Burke one of the great actresses of the day.

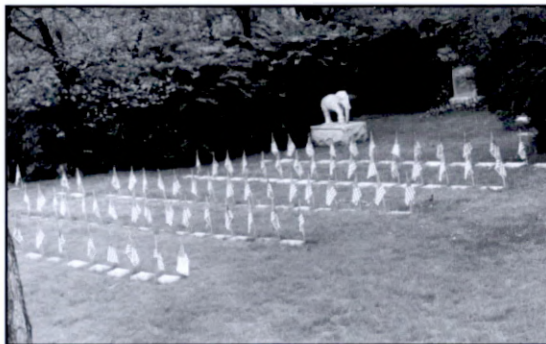
Hall Show Business Good

News comes from the Col. Hall show, whose home and winter quarters are in Evansville, Wisconsin that the show is doing big business and will probably run up late into the winter. Up to October 14, Col. George W. Hall's shows had traveled 17,000 miles this season, which is quite a record for a two-car circus. Business since returning to the states from Canada has been very nice, particularly in western Texas, where crop conditions are good.

The Colonel Hall circus has the distinction of being the first tent show to play Brownfield, Texas (Terry County). A railroad was built there a few months ago.

E. C. Talbot, president of the Showmen's League of America, spent Monday of last week in Tulsa,

Oklahoma, where the Con T. Kennedy shows were exhibiting and honored this exhibition by giving it the privilege of being the first to subscribe to the fund Mr. Talbot is raising for the league to be expended in purchasing and setting headstones and markers over the graves of the victims of the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus wreck, who are buried in Showmen's Rest, Woodlawn Cemetery, Chicago.



The Hagenbeck-Wallace wreck victims burial plot at Showman's Rest.

Appeal Meets Response

President Talbot's appeal met with a ready response from all classes and grades; workingmen vied with bosses and owners of concessions; not a single refusal was chronicled and some who were busy getting ready for opening night and fearful Mr. Talbot might overlook them, hunted him up and tendered their subscriptions. Not all were members of the league who subscribed and in addition to their contribution to this fund, made application for membership in the league.

No one who stood beside the open grave in Woodlawn, where the mortal remains of nearly 60 known and unknown dead were placed to rest until the final judgment day and witnessed the scenes that surrounded the saddest funeral ever known, will fail to respond to this appeal. No one that witnessed or read of these scenes but had a new light on the scope of usefulness of the league. Colliers in the east and Jim Jam Jams in South Dakota gave pages to extensive accounts. Sam Clark's article is worthy of being framed and placed in a most conspicuous place on the walls of the club. From far and wide came words of praise for the work of the league. Now as a fitting final act comes the marking of the

graves of all, known and unknown, sleepers in that plot of ground where they were placed to rest by the loving hands of their fellow workers in their chosen field of endeavor; the work of carrying on the gospel of entertainment during the dark days of the period of war and strife from which we have just emerged. There is no question but the drive Mr. Talbot is conducting will "go over the top" and beyond.

November 12, 1919

A few days ago an old-timer drifted into town, stopping off, as he said, to look me up and visit over old times. He was the driver with the Burr Robbins show in 1880, which was the year that Burr Robbins met with the accident on the Court Street Bridge. While I do not remember him, he recalled so many incidents that happened that year that there was no question about his identity. He told me he was now 65 years old and had missed traveling with the circus only some four years since that time.

He, as well as many others who traveled with the wagon show that year, will never forget the season of 1880. We opened the season at Delavan, Wisconsin in the cold drizzling rain and after making Elkhorn, Geneva, Burlington and then turning west to Whitewater, Fort Atkinson and Stoughton, all this time in a cold rain, almost day and night, as the old man told me, we saw but two bright sunshiny days in four weeks. At Stoughton it rained hard all the day. We got the big top up and a few seats and as the town was crowded with people, we opened the doors and commenced taking tickets with not more than seats enough up to accommodate 300 or 400 people.

Crowd Got Rough

Mrs. Robbins was attending one door and I the other, but the crowd got so rough that I shut off my door and went and took her place and sent her down to the hotel. Many of the horses had bad colds and especially did the ring horses suffer. Delavan, the boss hostler, came to me and said he would have to have some blankets for the ring stock at least, or he was afraid he would lose some.

Burr Robbins had come onto the show that day and when he heard I



had bought a dozen horse blankets for the ring stock, he declared he would not pay for them. I simply said to him, "You don't have to. They are all paid for and it looks as though we would have to buy a dozen more."

At this he lost his temper and declared he owned the show and said "while you are acting manager, you are getting too free in spending my money and I will allow nothing more bought without my signature."

Bought More Blankets

But he came back home on the train that evening and the show went through the rain and mud getting to Evansville. It was there that I bought a dozen more horse blankets and some two or three weeks later when the ticket agent was checking up with him and they came to the second dozen horse blankets, he declared he was only too glad to be able to be with the show a part of the time, or I would certainly break him.

Yet with all my lavish expenditures, I stayed there for five years and received more salary every year. It was later in the season of 1881 that he and E. D. Colvin of New York formed a partnership and started out a railroad show.

This year I still wanted more salary, but he informed me that he would run the show into Lake Michigan before he would pay it. But the show had only been on the road for a few weeks when he and Mr. Colvin had trouble and finally signed an agreement to turn the show over to me as manager and both of them would go away until matters were adjusted. This they did and I took charge of the show at Owosso, Michigan and it was not long until Mr. Robbins bought Colvin out and was again sole owner of the show.

Stayed with Show 5 Years

While Burr Robbins was not an easy man to get along with, I was there five years, handled the show as I thought best and always in the end, I came out victorious. Had he stayed in the show business, it was safe to say that he would have paid me as much or more salary than he ever paid anyone for the same kind of work, for he well knew that when he was away, the show would be looked after as carefully as though he were on the grounds every minute.

But later I drifted away to the Forepaugh show and while Mr. Forepaugh was an exacting manager, all you would have to do would be to be up to the minute with the work in your department and it was seldom that he would ever speak to you. If anyone wanted to know anything about the payment of the bill or anything pertaining to the ticket wagon, he would always say, "Go and see Dave. I know but little about his business."

This was why I always liked it with the Forepaugh show for the reason my business was my own and there was no one to dictate. But these are only a few incidents that would naturally happen in the business.

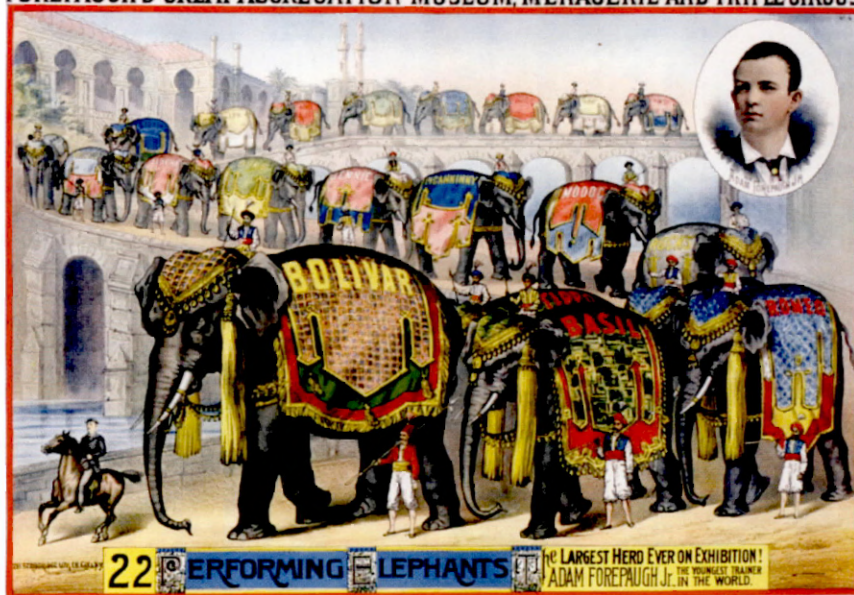
While the disposition of the two bosses was very different, they were both exacting to the last penny when it came to balancing the books.

November 15, 1919

A few days ago a friend of mine asked me why it was that I had not told them about elephants, their dispositions and whether or not their keepers could tell by looking at them or by their actions when they were likely to go on a rampage.

I told him what I knew about elephants which I learned from a distance as I was always ready to give them a wide berth. As a rule, when an elephant is a bad one, they always devise some means to get rid of him. At Philadelphia one of the elephants who had been in a bad temper for some days, when the keeper entered the car in the morning to take him out, suddenly grabbed him by his trunk, throwing him upon the floor, crushing him with his feet. Before any assistance could arrive, the young man was dead. When the news reached Adam Forepaugh, he said

FOREPAUGH'S GREAT AGGREGATION MUSEUM, MENAGERIE AND TRIPLE CIRCUS



THE LARGEST SHOW IN THE WORLD.

An 1882 Forepaugh lithograph featuring Bolivar. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

that this elephant would never kill another man. He at once hired an engine to haul the car out in the country some four miles, where the elephant was unloaded and taken down in a deep ravine. A military company, after the keeper had drawn a circle over the elephant's heart, poured into him 33 bullets at one time.

The largest elephant of the herd of 29 by the name of Bolivar was also a bad one, and after the show closed in the season of '88, Bolivar was given to the zoo in New York where he was always kept heavily chained. Out of the herd of 29 in the years I was with the show, only two were bad enough to cause any trouble.

At Fremont, Nebraska, just after the show opened in the evening, a bolt of lightning struck the tent and in less than 15 minutes, the canvas was burned to the ground. All the ropes and poles were left standing and no one was hurt, but I think the 29 elephants went in nearly that many directions. Although the searchers went out immediately on horseback after them, there were eight that could not be found. The show went on to the next town, but men in box cars were left back to gather them up. One elephant, who

was quiet as a kitten, wandered off into the country some six miles. When the man found him, the farmer with all his family were upstairs looking out the window. As the elephant had done some damage to the farmer's corn crib, the man told him to come downstairs and he would pay him for the damages, but the farmer insisted that the damages did not amount to much. All he wanted him to do was to take his elephant and get off the farm. The man stayed some time and got the family all out into the yard. They found that he was harmless and the farmer was given ten dollars to repair the damage.

As a rule, all good elephants are ready to make friends with anyone who is kind to them.

The 1919 tour of the Sells-Floto circus will terminate at Hot Springs, Arkansas Thursday, November 13, from which point the show will journey back to Denver, Colorado for the winter. From reports it will be one of the most successful if not the greatest season the show has ever had in its history.

The circus left Denver April 11 for Wichita Falls, Texas where the tour was begun April 17. Twenty-five states and two provinces of Canada were entered, the states consisting of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont,

New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. Ontario and Quebec were the provinces. When the show closes it will have covered 14,557 miles, including the run from Denver to Wichita Falls, but not the one "homeward." Week engagements were played in St. Louis and Boston, while the two-day stands included Montreal, Detroit, Kansas City, New Orleans and Atlanta. Cleveland was played May 10 with a return date July 28. The season was three days less than thirty-one full weeks. Sunday performances were given in Kansas City and New Orleans and two will be given in Appaloosa, Louisiana November 9.

The show will start its 1920 season some time in March.

November 22, 1919

The following letter written by O. D. Brandenburg, Madison, a life long friend of the Ringlings and one of the oldest personal friends of the late Alf T. Ringling, the great showman who passed away some two weeks ago, will be of interest to the reader.

"I am sure all the good people of Baraboo will be interested in the details of the funeral of Alfred T. Ringling," writes O. D. Brandenburg, Madison, who was present. Mr.

Alfred Theodore Ringling, 1885-1919.



Brandenburg now is at his childhood home in Flushing, Ohio, whither he was going when notified of his friend's death.

"Alfred ultimately," adds Mr. Brandenburg, "will be laid away in an enduring mausoleum on the mountain, half a mile across the valley from his own beautiful home and clearly visible from it. It will be stately isolation, but this is his wish, solemnly expressed. I said mountain, indeed it rises pretty nearly to that dignity, thrice the height of the bluffs at Devils Lake or more.

"The funeral occurred at 2:30 Friday afternoon--an ideal day, the sun full, air balmy, the woods and the valley all in amber. Here nature has painted an exquisite autumn. It was a little group of relatives chiefly, with scarcely more than half a dozen intimates that formed a semi-circle in the great living room of the Ringling country home. Richard, the sorrowing son, had come hastily from Montana and the sister, Mrs. Harry North, had journeyed from Baraboo. The brothers, Charles and John, with their wives, were there; also Charles' two children, Robert and Hester, now Mrs. Louis G. Lancaster; also John M. Kelley, attorney for the Ringlings and C. C. Wilson closely related to them in their circus operations. Then there was Alfred's widow, little, bowed and grieving; and her sister. These and two or three others formed the sorrowing assembly with the several servants of the household in the background.

"Flowers, the richest that New York could produce, were round about the casket, with a great blanket of greenery thrown carelessly over the foot. Alfred had died in his sleep, and his expression was one of complete freedom from pain.

"Rev. Dr. Peter McMillan, pastor of the Presbyterian church at Dover, nine miles away, officiated. If he had known the dead, he could have told of his gentle nature, his ceaseless courtesy, his generosity, but in the absence of personal knowledge, he dealt in inspiring generalities, effectively and soothingly. The Grace Church quartet from Orange, New Jersey, associated with the oldest Episcopal church in the state, sang, while there were two solos, Nearer, My God To Thee, by Mrs. Rebecca B.

Pharon, soprano, and Oh Rest in the Lord, by Miss Helen Bayes, contralto. C. Henry Earle was tenor and William Zinc basso, while George W. Kernmer played the great pipe organ, of which it is doubtful there is a finer one in any home in all America. The music was uncommonly sweet and impressive.

"At once, after the service, a little procession formed, some six or eight motor cars, and all that was mortal of the dead was taken to Dover, where, in a vault there or in one of the nearby larger cities, it will rest till the mausoleum is ready on the mountainside.

"Mr. Ringling died at 8:10 Tuesday morning. The crisis came unexpectedly although the patient had been ill more or less for three or four weeks; indeed, to some extent for a year or so, once or twice gravely. John Ringling motored over frequently from New York City, 30 miles away, and the night before death came, he was at his brother's bedside until nearly 11 o'clock when the doctor gave his assurance that Alf was sleeping restfully. There seemed to be no immediate danger, although at this time, all realized from many circumstances, that Alf was in a serious condition. Aneurysm of the heart was the trouble. This, Alf himself, had known for a year or more, and recently he had talked of the inevitableness of death, showing where his thoughts were and giving intimation to those about that he was conscious of his own situation. About 8 o'clock the attending physician telephoned to John to come back at once, that a turn for the worse had occurred, and when he returned to the bedside, life had departed. It was wholly painless. Anesthetics had been employed for some time. The Saturday night before, John had been with his brother and they had smoked together and chatted gaily till late, Alf sitting up." This briefly is the story of the last days of Alfred T. Ringling.

Mr. Brandenburg adds: "The home that Alfred Ringling created in New Jersey, and its environment, are wondrously beautiful. Half a mile in front is the mountain-like bluff, all densely wooded. Nearly an equal distance back is a like elevation, both now all aglow with the most brilliant of autumn hues. A winding artificial

lake from 50 to 300 feet wide half surrounds the home and creeks opening from the lake at both ends unite in front, completing the circle. The estate probably embraces 600 acres, and it is wild, picturesque, silent and serene, yet with one of the world's greatest cities over the hills and the Hudson but thirty miles away. Not a trolley is within sound and the whistle of the steam cars comes vaguely from afar. Here the famous circus man was enjoying life greatly, spending his money lavishly and delightedly, \$150,00 or more in the creation of this restful refuse."

December 2, 1919

I think if my memory serves me right that it was in 1877 [1872] that the Barnum show was the first one to leave the wagons or rather the wagon shows and take to the railroads. This was all new to the railroad men as well as the show people. When the Barnum show would contract with the St. Paul or Northwestern, the railroad officials would pick one of their best crews to take charge of the circus as long as they were on their system.



Byron Rose, Master of Transportation.

As the work was all new to both officials and Barnum & Bailey, they were on the lookout for a good man to take charge of their trains. They used to run in three sections. James Bailey [Watt probably means W. C. Coup] had been watching a young railroad man, and although he was a new man on the road, Mr. Bailey [Coup] thought he would make a

good man to take charge of his trains as master of transportation.

The young man's name was Byron Rose. The railroad men took in the show every afternoon. When young Rose came to the door, Mr. Bailey [Coup] stopped him and told him that he would like to have a talk with him.

The two went into the menagerie where they had a long conference. When they finished, young Rose was hired to take charge of transportation. That was the beginning of the life work of Byron Rose.

He made several changes that summer and when the show closed the season and went into winter quarters at Bridgeport, Connecticut Mr. Rose told Mr. Bailey, [Coup] who was always the active manager of the show, that he thought in order to get efficiency in everything pertaining to the different sections of the show that the master of transportation should have charge of the sleepers, hire and discharge the porters, and, in fact, have charge of everything pertaining to the moving of the show.

This Mr. Bailey [Coup] agreed to. Byron Rose advertised in New York papers for seven car porters to whom he would pay \$15 a week and all expenses. This was as much as the average railroad porter was getting a month, and Byron Rose had no trouble in getting good men. All the performers and managers, in fact everyone connected with the show with the exception of the working people, had to pay Mr. Rose 50 cents per

week, which included the shining of their shoes at night by the porters. I think Mr. Rose remained with the show some 20 odd years. In his day he was considered one of the most competent men in the business.

It was along in the middle '80's at the time that Tom Croft was the agent of the St. Paul Road here. When the train pulled in here in the morning Tom Croft threw up his hands and was excited and declared that it would be impossible for him to handle the show here as there were not sufficient side tracks. It was only a few minutes before Byron Rose walked down the platform in a slow, easy way and asked for the agent. Tom Croft said that he was the agent, but he said that it would be impossible for him to handle the show in these years. Byron Rose said that if Mr. Croft would take an easy chair, just to sit down and in an hour and a half the show would be unloaded and all the cars out of the way. As soon as this was done, he asked if he could tell him where he could find W. H. Madoon, who was an old friend of his that he had met many times in New York City. Forever after that when the show came to Janesville Byron Rose and Mr. Madoon spent all their time together visiting over old days which they had spent in New York.

Edward Arlington

New York-Edward Arlington of the Sells-Floto circus, returned to New

York this past week. It is reported that Mr. Arlington is contemplating the outright purchase of paraphernalia for a circus about the size of the Sells-Floto show, or the organization of one by the combination of two or more smaller ones, to be shipped to England for a syndicate of prominent theatrical men headed by J. L. Sachs, London producer of feature pictures and J. G. Wainwright, also well known in London as a producer of screen productions.

Should present negotiations fall through, Mr. Arlington intends to build a complete tented outfit which he would ship to England, the horses, animals, etc., to be purchased on the other side. He is planning to leave for overseas about February to investigate the animal situation. After landing what he terms a "complete American show" in England, Mr. Arlington will return to the United States to open the 1920 season with the Sells-Floto circus.

Famous Clown Dies

New York-After three weeks' illness at the hospital on Ward's Island Steve Miaco, the famous clown, passed away Friday morning, Nov. 14. He is survived by his father, Fred Frisbie Miaco, his wife and two sons, Stephen, age 8 and Gordon, age 3.

The Miacos are famous in the circus world and originally came from New Orleans. The deceased was a member of the Guthrie, Oklahoma lodge of Elks. His father and family were at his bedside until the end.

CIRCUS HALL OF FAME



Wishing all our friends a
Joyous Christmas Season
and a very

Happy New Year

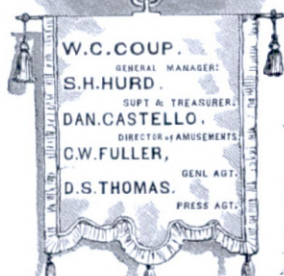


See you at the circus !

A LETTERHEAD FROM THE ARCHIVES



Occupies the entire block bounded by Madison and Fourth Avenues, and 26th and 27th Streets.



New York Mar 11th 1855

Dear Sarah

I just
received your letter also the papers
for which I am very thankful, about
letting the house if Mother thinks she
arrange it I let a part of it I
am willing. but I don't see how
she can and have her things as she will
move them. Will Abbott is not sure
pay, it does not strike me favorable.
it will make a difference about the
insurance of you at the house, the
things around the buildings were left

in shape & let any one ~~if~~ some one interested take
possession. I think you better write to Wallace & let
the land & any one he thinks best. or in short &
do just as he would if it was his. and we will be
satisfied. but I don't think it best to let the house
I think some of coming to Boston next Saturday but can't
tell sure now, tell Jane she had better stay.
Perhaps you better not answer Wallaces letter until
Monday if I should come we could talk it over
with Fave & all I am as ever Wallace

After three wildly successful seasons touring a conventional circus, the Barnum organization stunned the sawdust world in 1874 by taking out P.T. Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome, which featured races around a huge oblong track. This 1875 letterhead, measuring 9 1/2" x 14 3/4", is the most elaborate piece of circus stationary known to exist up to that time.

Visit Circus World America's Circus Museum

Open Year Round in Baraboo, Wisconsin



Visit the home of American circus heritage! See circus history come to life in the original winter quarters of the Ringling Bros. Circus, a National Historic Landmark.

- Explore the world's largest collection of grand, one-of-a-kind circus wagons in the W.W. Deppe Wagon Pavilion.
- Step inside the C.P. Fox Wagon Restoration Center and see the specialized tools skilled craftsmen use to re-create the splendor of historic circus wagons.
- Browse a treasure trove of American circus heritage in the Irvin Feld Exhibit Hall, and take in exhibits of rare circus posters and extravagant graphics.
- Discover the story of the Ringling Bros. and the circus that made them world famous.
- Explore the world's foremost facility for documenting and researching American circus history in the Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center.
- Mark your calendar for Circus World's performance season, May 19 through September 3, 2007.



Circus World Museum
550 Water Street, Baraboo, WI 53913
Call Toll Free 866-693-1500
www.wisconsinhistory.org/circusworld/



BANDWAGON

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Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor

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THE FRONT COVER

Singing clowns were fixtures on circuses throughout the 19th century. Many shows printed booklets, called clown songsters, containing the comic songs, some jokes and perhaps a little propaganda about the troupe that were sold during the performance. The songsters' covers usually had a portrait of the featured clown along with the title of the show; the circuses whose clowns had no name recognition used other illustrations.

An example of this latter type is this one sold on the Ringling Bros. Circus in 1888. It is one of the few images of the brothers Ringling before they all grew their famous moustaches. Circus World Museum collection.

NEW MEMBERS

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Flint, Michigan 48503-5392

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In addition to above many other issues are available going back to the 1950s. If you are in need of early issues write to the Editor. Price is \$4.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

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SEASON REVIEW

As usual the review of the 2006 circus season will be in the March-April *Bandwagon*. An important part of the article is information sent in by *Bandwagon* readers.

Information and photos of smaller shows, indoor and outdoor, are particularly needed.

We are very anxious to receive photos of Vincenta Pages' tiger act on the Ringling Blue unit as well as her motor home pulling an arena trailer. Please send your material to the editor as soon as possible.

New Book by Bob Goldsack

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and the

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